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JERRY
THE
DREAMER





Fiction, ~~1700-1800~~

JERRY THE DREAMER

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JERRY THE DREAMER

BY
WILL PAYNE^{o, c, i}
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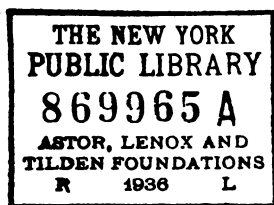
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JERRY THE DREAMER

I

As a town Tampico was an utter failure. It had a poor little street, degenerated into a mere country lane—grass-grown, weed-grown, made free of by stray cows and chickens; a half-dozen frame buildings, of which only two—the post-office and general store and the *Herald* office—retained the dignity of their original urban use; a surrounding of sloping woods and rolling fields, vacant save for the agricultural intrusion which leaves so respectfully large a margin of nature to each human trespasser. At night the vast country solitude rolled down over little Tampico and engulfed it like an Atlantic engulfing a derelict bumboat. Such was the degree of Tampico's decadence that the country folk looked down on the townfolk. No town can get lower than that.

Old men of the neighborhood still talked fondly about the boom, although at the period of expansion referred to nobody had known it for a boom, that invention of the real-estate man being then far in

the future. It was admitted that Tampico had one of the finest sites for a town in Illinois. The canal came down in a straight line from the north, and the Hare River swung in from the west. The time of growth and hope, long afterwards called the boom, was coincident with the making of the canal in 1834. There was no ruinous speculation in options on corner lots nor in ninety-nine-year leases. But in two years the population grew from three hundred and fifty to near one thousand, and the number of buildings increased proportionately. In fine summer weather men sat about watching the digging of the huge ditch which was to float their commerce to Chicago and the world, and felt in their blood that vague itching fever of expectancy which is the soul of the boom. When they went home at night they called their possessions worth ten per cent. more, which is the body of the boom. Eight years later the Chicago and Great Western Road built its first line five miles to the west and established a town, whither, in a couple of years, most of the material part of Tampico which was worth the moving was transplanted. In succeeding years other railroad towns took the better part of the remainder.

Now, the sluggish waterways and the weeds nodding, sleeping in the street gave Tampico a picturesque effect of visibly weltering in its ruin. In the summer now and then a canal-boat went slowly by, stone laden. When there was no canal-boat whoever wished to get an effect of life and motion in Tampico had to go down to the old red bridge

that crossed the mill-pond and watch the thin, clear stream break over the ragged, water-green, and sun-brown dam. There was almost no current in the pond, but when the water got to the edge of the dam it suddenly awoke and leaped over briskly, with a pleasant, humming roar.

The effect was especially agreeable at the end of a summer day, when the woods beyond the canal began to mellow and darken and run together, and that immense, wonderful stillness of a country twilight began coming up from the warm ground—stillness which the hum of the dam and the shrill noise of insects and prefatory, tentative, grating frog-croaks made only more distinct and impressive.

On such a summer evening Jerry Drew crossed the bridge, without noticing the woods or the dam or anything at all that the two gray eyes under his black, thick, straight brows could see, for he was really looking at things much more wonderful and interesting to him—things far off. Half-way over the bridge he did glance down the stream with a momentary interest in the view. He thought, "It's the last time I'll see it," and he was glad.

Then, looking at the far things, he went by the post-office and down what had been the business street to a very shabby, warped little building at the farther end. A light came through the small-paned front window with some difficulty, because of the dirt on the panes. A sign, "Tampico Herald," had once been fastened across the gable. But it had fallen down, and Captain Tunnicliff, editor

and proprietor, had set it on end beside the door. The second summer afterwards the sign had blown over, and it still lay hidden in the weeds. The captain was reminded of the sign as often as once a year, but he said he guessed everybody knew where the *Herald* was by that time. The captain was a very tall, very lank, elderly man with sparse, grizzled whiskers and strange old clothes. He was addicted to plug tobacco and sedentary ways. Without anybody saying so, the impression prevailed that he sat so much because he could chew better that way.

Jerry opened the door and stepped in. As he had expected, Captain Tunnicliff and Henry Brock and Ezra Mullins were playing seven-up. The room was neither ceiled nor plastered. A hand-press, a printer's case, and much slovenliness revealed its journalistic character. There was a door behind the press, and through it Captain Tunnicliff could step from the glare of public life into the seclusion of his home.

A small kerosene lamp furnished the players light. This light was not very good, but it was quite oppressive to Jerry as he stood, awkward and self-conscious, by the door. He had on a suit of brand-new clothes, besides polished boots and a tie recommended by the young man at Hartley as the latest thing. Jerry felt the effect to be grossly spectacular. He had decided to defer his purchase of a new hat until he got to Chicago, so now he took off the old one and held it conspicuously in front of him, not only as a sort of peace-offering of

humility but because he felt that it obscured a little of his garish, overpowering newness. He was a solidly-made young fellow, with a head both compact and shapely and stiff black hair.

"I thought I'd come in and say good - bye," he said, in an embarrassed way.

Captain Tunnicliff looked over at him amiably. "Goin' in the morning, eh?" he said.

Henry Brock — fat, dark, smooth-faced, dirty — put down the seven of hearts. "Suppose we'll see you back here some time?" he said.

Ezra Mullins gave a quick glance at the young fellow. Then he looked down at the cards and moved uneasily in his seat. "It's your play," he said to Brock.

Captain Tunnicliff, with some difficulty and some help from the others, got his long legs from under the table and came over, holding out a big, bony hand attached to a wrist that protruded a surprising long way from the shrunk coat-sleeve. "Goin' right off?" he inquired, hospitably; "can't you stay? You must say good-bye to the women folks."

"Oh yes, I will; but I can't stay," Jerry replied.

Brock came over, too, and shook hands. He was a saturnine man and a wit; once a lawyer, now given somewhat to drink and more to idleness. He gave the traveller the address of a cheap hotel in Chicago, and told him how to find it, and showed an interest in him otherwise. "And if you find that the newspaper business in Chicago don't pan out," he said, "you want to remember there are two ways

of getting back : you can float down the canal or walk down the railroad-track."

Ezra Mullins sat by the table impatiently fingering his cards, and now and then glancing at the group by the door. He neither spoke nor offered to come over and shake hands. Jerry, looking at him once or twice, had a daring notion of calling out, "Good-bye, Mr. Mullins," anyhow ; but he gave it up and went out without having spoken. Not that there was the least enmity between Ezra Mullins and Jerry Drew. Only Jerry was "keeping company" with Elsie Mullins, and that made the young man feel embarrassed before the elder. And Jerry was accounted a very brilliant and accomplished young man, being a graduate from the Hartley school, and having, to all men's knowledge, been the real editor of the *Herald*, as well as the compositor, reporter, pressman, and delivery service for a year and a half. Ezra Mullins could just write his name, and therefore the elder man was embarrassed before the younger.

Having finally said good-bye to the women folks—that is, to globular, loquacious Mrs. Tunnicliff and the two angular but kindly Misses Tunnicliff—Jerry climbed the fence behind the printing-office and went up the hill through Mullins's pasture. The cow, reclining near his path, lifted her head and blew a great breath through her nostrils at him. Over in the wood a whippoorwill began its haunting call.

The Mullins's house had an upright part and an "L." It was painted white, and had green blinds

and a porch in front of the "L." A big clump of lilacs half hid the gate, and it was only as he was opening it that the young man saw the slim, white figure beside it.

"Elsie!" he cried.

"Oh, Jerry!" answered the girl's voice, and the slim figure slid into his opening arms. He kissed her, which she took in the most matter-of-fact way. Then they sat down on the high walk that ran from the gate to the porch, his arm around her waist and her head on his shoulder.

A thousand precious, momentous things pressed for utterance in their hearts, but not much was said. The moment had been present in the thoughts of each constantly throughout the day. To him it was the sum of his home-leaving, to her it was the beginning of a long desolation, to both it was a climax. But, like the rest of their lives, it was inarticulate. Now and then they spoke of something that interested neither of them. Then they kissed each other and fell into a long, troubled silence. By-and-by he got her hand and spread it out on his knee, and patted it with his broad, brown paw.

"You'll write real often?" she said.

"Of course I will," he replied. "I expect it will be a week before I can find the post-office, though."

"I hope you will like your work and get along real well," she said; "and, of course, you will get along," she added, proudly.

"Well, I hope so," Jerry replied, thoughtfully.

"I don't know much about reporting, and I'll be pretty green about the city; but Prothro says he can get me a position, and if I can get in once I think I'll stay in." As a matter of fact he had no doubt about it, and he doubled up his strong fist to assure himself of it.

They were still for a while; then she said, plucking at his big fingers nervously: "I expect you'll see lots of pretty girls there."

"None as pretty as you," he said, boldly, though down in his heart he hoped it wasn't true. He would have resented any imputation of disloyalty to Elsie; yet in those dreamed experiences which he was constantly dramatizing to himself he frequently met a beautiful and wealthy young lady, with whom he heroically refused to fall in love notwithstanding many temptations. It seemed to him, in his heart, that his loyalty to Elsie would be rather cheap and shabby without some test of that kind.

In one of the pauses the gate clicked and a heavy foot fell on the walk behind them. Elsie straightened up quickly, and her father, merely glancing down at them, went on into the house. When the door closed behind him Elsie looked around at Jerry, smiling.

"He caught us that time, didn't he?" she said, as though it were a joke, and put her head on his shoulder again.

It was an hour later when Jerry arose to go. He held her close in his arms, her breast fluttering, her fingers clutching his arms. She had to speak then.

"I don't know 's you'll come back, Jerry," she began, tremulously.

"Course I will," he protested, half angrily.

"You can't tell, dear," she said, quietly. "It seems like a long ways. It's all different there, and it's going to make a big difference in you—I can see that. I don't know as I'll see you again—you can't be sure—" She paused, while the brave woman spirit in her, born to suffer and keep silent, strove for control.

She held herself a little from him and looked earnestly into his eyes. "But I want you to be good—good!" she cried, and flung her arms around his neck.

Jerry bent his head to hers, much moved. A little later it began troubling him, and he wished she had not said it. He had not counted particularly on being good. In fact, he had often seen himself returning to Tampico, at the end of about three years, rich, famous, and utterly world-weary from many experiences. He had thought of building a splendid house on the hill in Mullins's pasture overlooking the river and canal, and spending his days there in pastoral quiet and mysterious seclusion, broken only now and then as the nation threw itself at his feet in some crisis and begged him to come forth and save it—which he always did, for he was patriotic on principle. Three years seemed an eternity to wait, as is commonly the case at twenty. Yet the result, as he pictured it to himself, appeared worth so prolonged an effort.

He stopped in the midst of thinking of these

things on his way home. In a moment, as by some sudden shifting of a scene in his brain, he saw it all—all he had hoped for and dreamed of—mere gauzy, foolish moonshine. The momentary disillusion struck him sad and cold.

Meantime Elsie had gone into the house, her heart aching. She set a mouse-trap in the pantry, and laid papers very carefully over the pans of milk. Then she went up the steep, narrow stairs to the bare little room where she slept, undressed slowly, put out the light, got into bed, and, being from the sight and hearing of every one, took her misery into her arms and cried over it.

Jerry went on homeward slowly in one of those rare moods when youth is dragged out of its clouds, is suddenly, cruelly thrust down into the mean, cheap, actual present, and is quenched and confused by it. His mother was waiting for him in the room where they ate and cooked and sat, except when there was company. The floor was bare and the low walls were roughly plastered. There was a cracked cook-stove, a row of shelves, with pans and dishes on them, a table covered with a faded red cloth.

Because Jerry was sad the parting from his mother and brother Tom seemed very pathetic to him, although he had not thought of it that way before.

The Widow Drew, as she was always called, lived in a small frame-house at the edge of the village. She owned eighty acres of land there which she rented. The income was not large, but it sufficed. She was a thin, stooped woman, shapeless from hard

work and sallow from bad fare, like all the middle-aged women thereabout. Jerry was taking to Chicago his own hundred dollars that he had worked for and saved. It was a Spartan life, but without any Spartan ideals.

Mrs. Drew sat by the table reading the weekly temperance paper when her son came in. She had been a school-ma'am early in life and was distinguished, not by the ability to read, which was common to all the women, but by the use of it, which was rarer. As he entered she put down her paper and took off her spectacles, and stood up. She could not have gone to bed without seeing him; but now that he was before her she had nothing to say to him save one or two simple directions about his clothes. And in a minute he was clumping up the steep, bare stairs to the room under the roof where his younger brother was already asleep. It took Jerry a long time to go to sleep, and he awoke in the gray break of dawn with so sudden and immense an inrush of joy that it held him spellbound for a moment. This was the day—the far off, dreamed of, impossible day—when he was going away! Actually there at last!

He jumped out of bed, dressed hastily, and ran down-stairs. His mother was already getting his breakfast. He kept walking up and down the room, his eyes forever on the sputtering eggs, the singing teapot. He had never known things to take so long cooking, or his mother to be so slow. When he got to the table he bolted a few mouthfuls and gulped down a cup of coffee. Then he

walked up the road a ways, looking for the mail-carrier's cart, and back, and about the house and to the barn, burning with impatience.

He felt as though he must get his hands on things and hasten them along. His mother gave him the temperance paper, and advised him to read it to pass the time. She went on stoically enough clearing up the breakfast things. Jerry sat by the window, but he could not read two lines and get the sense of them. Finally, with a startling effect of suddenness, Tom's "Here he comes!" sounded outside.

Jerry sprang up. His mother came over to him and gave him a dry, hard little kiss, but he saw that her thin hands shook a little.

"Good-bye, Jerry; write often; be a good boy," she said, in a voice that shook a little, too.

"I will, mother; good-bye," said Jerry, moved, now that the parting had come.

He seized the new trunk, which looked rather imposing to him, and started towards the door. Tom ran in and picked up the satchel. In a moment Jerry was in the cart—the trunk behind, the satchel in front—starting away.

The mist was rising from the river, and he remembered, with surprise, how early it was. Mullins's house was still closed and given over to sleep. As they passed it Jerry looked up at the little window in the gable, with its plain white muslin curtain. No sign of life appeared there, and that parting made him sad, too, for a moment. Just past Mullins's they came to the brow of the hill.

Beyond was a great panorama of rich, rolling, green country ; far off a spire at Hartley, and away beyond that, off in the purple clouds, Chicago—life, fame, money, joy ! Jerry's heart gave a great leap ; his eager spirits rushed forward.

II

THE clouds were there when Jerry got off the train at Chicago, but they had changed from purple to gray. Rain was falling in a fine, aggravating drizzle, that made only a low, big humming on the iron and glass roof of the vast shed under which he alighted. The shed sheltered a dozen trains and a multitude of passengers going and coming.

Jerry took a firm hold of his bag and followed the throng pouring from his train up the long, fenced platform into the wide entrance of a cavernous waiting-room, and on up the broad steps to the street. He had written down and learned by heart the directions Brock had given him, so he knew he must first cross the river at his right. It seemed to him that the hotel should lie the other way, but the towering, irregular shapes of the vaster buildings lay to the right, too, and he ran out into the rain, making for the bridge, his head bent forward and ducked into his upturned coat-collar. The foot passage of the bridge was brimming full of people, and the streaming lines of them led on far down the street beyond. At the first corner he dodged under the awning of a saloon and examined the lamp-post. The name on it was that of the street which Brock said lay first beyond the river, and that reas-

sured him. In this way, from corner to corner, skipping under the rain, he found his way to the little hotel, where he registered and got a room almost before he got his breath.

"Any baggage?" asked the clerk, politely.

But Jerry had seen the sign—"Guests without baggage must pay in advance." He understood the ulterior object of the politeness, and tossed his trunk-check on the desk with the kind of pride one feels in being responsibly identified to the suspicious teller at the bank.

The clerk asked him if he would go to his room, and he caught at the suggestion. It was a very little and shabby room, with possibilities of dampness and chilliness quite out of proportion to its size. He took off his wet coat and vest, then carefully locking and bolting the door that he might not be discovered, peeled the counterpane from the bed and wrapped it around his shoulders, and sat down by the one window. The view gave upon a dingy blank brick wall across the little court, and when he was satisfied that no one could see him from that side he took out his money and counted it; then rolled the bills in a tight little wad again and put them back in the watch-pocket of his trousers, where he fastened them with a big pin.

It was not at all like what he had fancied the coming to the city would be. He felt vaguely oppressed and bored instead of elated. The sense of triumph had quite escaped him. He had got no impression of anything, but only a distressing feeling of isolation and aimlessness. He had very care-

fully prepared himself to keep his eyes wide open and his wits about him as soon as he came in sight of the city. He had a notion that an intelligent young countryman's first impression of the city might be made into reading acceptable to the newspapers, if he should find it necessary to fall back upon ephemeral work of that kind, and he had meant to look out particularly for the bits of comedy and the odd pictures in which he felt sure, from reading Dickens, the streets abounded. But the city had first stolen upon him unawares, then suddenly overwhelmed him. He remembered the little communities of frame dwellings, citified by macadam streets and gas-lamps, set out in the wide, flat, green prairie, with considerable stretches of meadow and truck-garden between them. Then the houses became more continuous, and a big brick factory disclosed itself in the distance. Then there were the backs of solid rows of brick buildings with series of wooden galleries from top to bottom. He recalled whirling between interminable lines of freight-cars, getting glimpses now and then of squalid streets and dingy, dilapidated shanties, the factories meantime becoming more numerous. The air grew murky with smoke. A row of towering chimneys within his view rolled their sooty clouds into the drizzling rain, the train crossed a bridge, the passengers began getting up, the brakeman shouted "All out!" Then he was jostling and pushing with the other passengers through the station and into the street. He remembered big boats lying in the oily, sluggish, ill-

smelling river and glimpses of streets that lost themselves in the smoke and rain. But all this was confused, blurred, unindividualized. He knew there had been a great many people in the streets, but he could not recall what one of them was like. His mind had been taken up with a wish to get out of the rain as quickly as possible, and with anxiety lest he lose his way or have his pocket picked. He could scarcely remember what the hotel clerk looked like, or what sort of a place the office was, save that it was rather small and dirty, and had a general effect of being out of repair.

He was greatly dissatisfied. This was Chicago—actually Chicago—and he was merely dawdling around in it. He felt it intolerable that he should pass the afternoon and evening without getting hold of a more satisfactory sense of being in the city. He went down to the office and bought the cheapest umbrella he could find in the shop next door. He was surprised at the cheapness until he put it up in the rain; then it did not seem remarkable. He walked south until he got among the pawn-shops, second-hand stores, and dirty saloons. Then he went east, and back to the hotel on another street. He was tired; but he had seen nothing—had no impressions. There had been only interminable rows of buildings—irregular, ugly, without distinction; endless streams of people going and coming; countless wagons and street-cars all singularly featureless and immemorable. After supper he bought a cigar, as a sign of his freedom, and sat in the office smoking it, but without any pleasure in it, or

in himself, or in his surroundings. He felt strangely flattened out and inconsequential.

He walked about all the next day, and found only two things that impressed him. One was the lake, which fascinated him; and the other was the moving boats on the river, which interested him. As soon as he turned to the streets, where endless streams of people hurried this way and that without one of them paying the least attention to him, or seeming to be aware of his existence, he had that same annoying sense of being alien, aimless, futile. He got no ideas or impressions, but only confusion and dulness, as from the impact of some big, hard thing.

He put off going to see Prothro until the second day. Out in Tampico it had all been easy and plain enough—indeed, he had never thought of a difficulty about it; but on the ground it was quite different, was, in fact, very difficult, so that he had to screw his courage considerably before it stuck.

Prothro was the one noted man who had come out of Tampico, although it was not until long after he moved to Hartley that he had flowered into more than local prominence. Jerry was related to him in some far-off and obscure way. Prothro had done good service during the campaign, and he was now United States District Attorney in Chicago. On him Jerry's hopes rested. He was a large, handsome man, with a smooth-shaven face, and iron-gray hair which crumpled effectively over his broad brow. Henry Brock liked to say that if,

in addition to the appearance of wisdom which he had, Prothroë had been endowed with any of the real article it would have amounted to an outrageous discrimination on the part of Providence.

Jerry finally found his office, having spent fifteen minutes furtively in the corridor of the government building trying to decide whether to climb the stairs and trust to luck to hit the right room, or to intrust himself to the elevator man, who might demand an explanation of his business.

A railing with a gate in it divided the district attorney's office in unequal parts. Behind the railing were three or four desks with men working at them and a girl at a type-writer. Men kept coming and going through the gate, and brushing Jerry first to this side and then to that as he stood docilely waiting for somebody to speak to him. By-and-by a young man at a desk looked up in an annoyed sort of way. Jerry asked for Mr. Prothroë. The young man said he was in, but he was busy. Having said that he went on with his work. After waiting a minute Jerry sat down in a chair by the door and noted that it was eleven o'clock. Soon after twelve the young man to whom he had spoken came through the gate with his hat on. Seeing Jerry beside the door he hesitated.

"You wanted to see Mr. Prothroë?" he said, as though he were not at all sure of it.

"Yes," said Jerry.

"What name?"

"Drew," said Jerry, adding, for better identification, as the young man turned back, "from Tampico."

"Tampico? Is that near Hartley?" asked the young man.

"Six miles," said Jerry.

"Oh yes," said the young man, nodding and smiling, as though that made much difference. He went into an inner room, and when he returned a moment later Prothroë was behind him, smiling and beckoning to Jerry.

The inner room was impressive to Jerry from its height and the air of prosperous authority it wore. Prothroë sat him down by a table and beamed over at him, asking him questions of Tampico, showing or pretending an interest in him, taking up his poor bruised little atom of individuality, crushed and overwhelmed by the strange multitude, and getting it going again. Jerry went in collapsed; he came out blown up, and he floated down to the street in a sort of joyous maze with Prothroë's letter to the editor hugged in his breast-pocket.

The letter was to the editor of *The Clarion*, a Republican paper, while Jerry had fancied, artlessly, that one of the ties between himself and Prothroë was their thorough-going adherence to the Democratic party. This sign of a bond and understanding between the Democratic politician and the Republican paper surprised and shocked him a little. He hoped that Prothroë had said nothing to *The Clarion's* editor about the Tampico *Herald*, for Jerry had written some very bitter things about *The Clarion*. This, however, was only a fitting segment of his thought. The rest of it was an anxious, nervous dread and hope of meeting the editor.

What would he be like? What would he say? One moment it seemed impossible to him that the editor should hire him; then a reassuring word of Prothroë's would come back.

He hastened to *The Clarion* office, but he dared not go in. He went straight on by. As soon as he turned the corner he began telling himself it would be better to wait until the next day. When he got a little farther off he reproached himself bitterly for his cowardice and turned back. He got so far as the door to the elevator entrance. The elevator boy was playing with a kitten, and Jerry thought it a favorable opportunity to find out what floor the editor's room was on. As he thought it the elevator boy saw him, and stepped quickly back into the cage ready to ascend, and Jerry bolted. It was an hour later when he finally found himself going down the hall on the top floor, his heart in his mouth, his letter in his hand. The door of the room to which he had been directed was open, and a man with Parisian whiskers sat at a desk inside. To him Jerry silently handed the letter. The man read it, gave a quick glance at Jerry, a nervous twist to the whiskers, a little amused sort of smile, and scribbled on a piece of paper.

"Take that to Mr. Dix, Room 17," he said, handing Jerry the slip.

The door of Room 17 bore the sign "City Editor." The room was much smaller than the editor's. A youngish man, also whiskered and slightly bald, sat at a desk talking to two other men. Jerry went up to the desk, doubtfully, and handed out

his note. Mr. Dix took the note, glanced at it, then up at the bearer, and back at the note. Then he said "Hem!" and, as a sort of afterthought, "Sit down," and went on talking with the two men.

When they went out he began asking Jerry about his experience in journalism, and in a moment he had out the story of Prothro and the letter to the editor. He smiled a little as he heard it, and consulted a small red book on his desk.

"Of course," he said, "the what d' you call 'em paper out there that you were connected with is all right, only I don't know just where your experience will fit you to come in for metropolitan reporting." He looked at the book again and went on, thoughtfully: "There's a meeting of the State Butchers' Association over at the Lincoln House this afternoon. Suppose you drop around there about three o'clock. Tell 'em you're from *The Clarion*, and find out what they've done, and see what the delegates look like, and what they have to say about butchering in different parts of the State. Look out for the interesting things. Maybe they are butchering calves by machinery down at Cairo. Maybe the beeves at Peoria, where the distilleries are, develop D. T. Look out for things of that sort. Write it up in your own way for whatever you think it's worth, and bring the copy to me at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning. Then I can tell more about what you can do."

The clock over the desk at the Lincoln House was on the stroke of three when Jerry came out

from the pillar behind which he had been lurking and approached the clerk. The clerk was busy sorting some letters, and he paid no attention to the young fellow leaning anxiously over the desk. Jerry waited a moment ; then he began, humbly :

“Is there a meeting of the State Butchers—”

This seemed to offend the clerk somehow. He frowned, and said, “Up-stairs,” waving his hand towards them.

There were the stairs, and Jerry went up them. But on the second floor, confronted by a prospect of empty halls and innumerable closed doors, he seemed no better off than he had been before. In a moment a couple of men came up, talking together, and disappeared behind one of the doors. Jerry followed at a venture and knocked timidly.

A chubby man with a red beard opened the door a couple of inches and admitted, reluctantly, that there was a meeting of the State Butchers’ Association.

“I’d like to find out—” Jerry began ; “I’m a reporter—”

“Tain’t a public meeting !” said the man, angrily, and closed the door.

Jerry went down-stairs and took a seat in the lobby where he could watch that door. At half-past five it opened and a couple of dozen men swarmed out, talking together. Jerry hastened to the foot of the stairs, but he let half the men go by because they were talking together and paid no attention to him. Then the red-bearded man came down and Jerry stopped him, desperately. The man paused,

but kept on talking to his companion. In a moment he looked around at Jerry.

"I'm from *The Clarion*," said Jerry.

"Go see the secretary," said the red-bearded man, crossly.

"Could you tell me—" Jerry began, meaning to ask where the secretary was.

"Go see the secretary," said the delegate, more angrily than ever, and he and his companion turned in the direction of a huge hand painted on the wall over the legend "Bar-room."

Jerry ran up-stairs. The room from which the men came was quite deserted. He waited in painful suspense a few minutes, then he ran down-stairs. Nobody was left in the lobby except the clerk and an old gentleman who had been reading a newspaper all the time.

Jerry halted, looking first to one side then to the other, considering in a confused way whether to try the clerk or the red-bearded man in the bar-room, or to wait for the return of the other delegates. He waited a moment, not from choice, but from nervous inability to decide. When he finally went to the bar-room the red-bearded man had gone. Again he waited a moment, hoping he would reappear. When he went to the desk the clerk he had seen before had gone and another was in his place. The other knew nothing about any delegates, or whether there were any staying at the house, or when any would be in. His comprehensive ignorance on the subject stood like a stone wall in the way of Jerry's eager quest. The new reporter turned away

from the desk and looked helplessly around the office. Then it came to him, with a suddenness and force that were crushing, that he had let the meeting get away from him—that he was beaten.

No defeat could have been bitterer. Jerry went slowly, heavily to the door, and out on the street. He walked back to his hotel with his eyes on the flagging. It seemed impossible, but it was true. He had found his chance—the chance he had so ardently longed for—and had lost it. He had taken his throw and missed, all through a trivial mischance, through an unknown man's churlishness. He felt himself in a collapse. Things were suddenly cut off at his feet. There was nothing ahead.

He slept late next morning, and it was after the noon meal, which was dinner to him, when he took up the morning's *Clarion* with a hot sense of guilt and shame. On an inside page he found an account of the butchers' meeting. Then it flashed upon him that as the paper went to press in the middle of the night, it could not have been depending on his report of the meeting, and that if he had got up early, read the accounts in the morning papers, and written his own account from them, he might have kept his appointment with the city editor, and perhaps have come out very creditably by putting in the red-bearded man and some others whom he could have invented. By this time it was one o'clock, and he saw that his chance had gone by again.

III

JERRY spent the evening in his room at the hotel writing a letter to Elsie—just for the grateful sense of nearness to her which that occupation brought. He told her of everything—except his defeat; and he ended with some assurances of his success that made a lump come into his throat as he read them over.

The days that followed were dull, fitful, painful. He tramped aimlessly about the streets, always confused by the mere size and turmoil of the panorama; always oppressed by the huge, hurrying, indifferent mob, in which he seemed so alien and so helpless. He shrank from strangers as though, in some mysterious way, they might know of his failure. Even the chubby, ruddy little clerk at the hotel, who showed a disposition to be friendly, was invested with this terrifying potentiality. Once, as he stood at the desk answering the clerk's joke about the base-ball game, it seemed to him, as a veritable fact, that the clerk was about to grin and say, "Aren't you the fellow who tried to report that butchers' meeting for *The Clarion*?" and he hastened away very abruptly.

The indifference of the people bruised him—put him at a disadvantage, as though he had spoken a

different language. He had his failing moments of hunger for Tampico—for the quietness, friendliness of it. He recalled how it was there—the farm wagon coming slowly down the shaded road, the horses wagging their long necks up and down as they stepped; little rivulets of dust falling from the slow-turning wheels; the lank, bearded farmer up on the high seat, with big, rusty boots and tattered straw hat. If he met a stranger he regarded him with frank interest; said “How d’do?” or, at least, nodded as they passed. If the stranger were going his way, he would pull up on the lines and say, “Have a lift?” The two, in the simplest way, would make each other’s acquaintance, just as dogs and horses show an interest in one another.

Jerry took to answering advertisements in the newspapers, and, in reply, was invited to call at several publishing houses, where they offered him an agency in some other city, contingent upon his depositing various sums of money. Every day he intended to write something and send it around to the newspapers, and every day he found that he had nothing to write. The power of selection and arrangement seemed to have been quite drowned out of him by the flood of material in which he was immersed.

There was no longer a roll of bills pinned in his trousers-pocket. His whole stock was in silver. He saw that he must leave the hotel at once, and it was almost the bluest day he had seen. He had been over to the west side to look up a position in a foundry office. The man found that he had no

experience in that particular kind of work and no city references, and turned him away so kindly, and with such a cheering effect of regarding him as a fellow-human, that Jerry loved him for it, and got an accession of courage from it. Not that he had ever really flagged. From the first moment he had said to himself—in all moods from fitful buoyancy to sullen rage and despair—that he would stick it out and make his way in Chicago or die there. He had that large fact in his favor.

Coming back from the foundry office he struck into a shabby little street in the region of big, grimy, bare foundries, little saloons, frowzy boarding-houses, and smoke that lies just west of the river. He had money enough to pay his day's reckoning at the hotel and a few coins besides. His future seemed to have doubled up and come into his present. He was glowering defiantly at it with shut teeth.

A woman in an untidy wrapper shuffled out of a little saloon, carrying an earthen pitcher of beer. Because Jerry looked at her he happened to see an open door and a flight of stairs next the saloon, and beside the door a small sign, half obscured, "*The New Era*," done with flourishes that were superfluous, considering the dirt. Below the sign a slip of paper was tacked to the wall. On the paper was written "Wanted, a Printer." Jerry stopped and looked at the stairs. Printed slips, with the words "*The New Era*" on them, were tacked to several, and Jerry, following the path thus blazed, went up, and along a dim, narrow hall to an open door at the lower end, where he stood peering uncertainly into

a queer room. There was no artificial light within, and the large window at the back was so obscured by dirt that only a sort of yellow gloom fell through it. Jerry made out a printing-press in the corner as he stepped in. Then he saw a very tall, broad-shouldered man, with a large head, smoking a corn-cob pipe and staring at the window. At the sound of Jerry's footstep the man took his feet from the window-sill and got up, looking curiously at the caller.

"Do you want a printer?" Jerry asked.

"Yes, I want a printer," the man answered in a friendly voice, adding, abruptly, "Wait a minute; let's look at you." He fumbled in his pocket and found a match, and lit the single gas-jet in the middle of the room. Then he stood scowling and blinking under the sudden glare. Jerry guessed that he was forty. He was long-limbed, deep-chested, rugged. His neutral hair had worn very thin over the top. He had a small, close-cropped mustache, and a fine dome to his head, fronted by a broad, sloping brow. He had big, mild blue eyes, and as soon as they got accustomed to the light they twinkled down at Jerry as though somehow it were a joke.

"Yes, I want a printer," said the giant. "Dillingham's my name—Wilson T. Dillingham. I want a printer, but I don't want any Union man."

"I'm not a Union man," said Jerry. "My name's Drew."

"Glad to know you, Drew," said Dillingham, promptly; and he held out a long, bony hand quite

seriously. Then he sat down on the table, knocking off part of the litter in doing it. "Sit down," he said; and, putting his foot under the one chair, he swung it around in front of the table. "I'm not opposed to Unionism, you understand," he went on, gravely; "in fact, I believe in it, and advocate it in my paper. But it don't quite fit the conditions here. The trouble with a Union man is that if you don't happen to have his wages ready Tuesday night—and I don't happen to some of the time"—he paused, and gave Jerry a grin that was infantile in its frankness—"why, he gets huffy and quits, and reports you to the Union. So I have to draw the line at Union men, although I believe in Unionism. I can show you in the last issue—" He looked on either side of him, and turned over part of the rubbish on the table. "I guess I ain't got a copy," he acknowledged; "probably they've got one in the saloon. I want a man to go in and stick by me and take pot-luck with me until we get the paper on its feet—which will be in a short time—and then there'll be as good a thing in it for him as he wants. And I'd like a man," he added, with a helpless glance around the littered office, "who could sort of straighten things up and keep them in some sort of shape. My last man was no good at all; you can see how he left things."

"When did he go away?" Jerry asked.

"Three weeks ago," said Dillingham. "You see"—he put the corn-cob pipe in his pocket and leaned back against the wall, clasping his big hands over one elevated knee—"I guess I'm about the

only paper in Chicago, except the big dailies, that does its own printing. It's a case of extremes meeting. But I had this print-shop in the country, and when I decided to start up here I brought it with me. I reckon it costs me more than it would to get the edition printed outside; but it seems more like a newspaper, somehow, to have your own press. Of course I intended to use this outfit just for a month or two, but the business didn't go ahead quite as I'd a liked to have it." He stopped and grinned. "The subscribers have sort of hung off." Then he added very gravely, as though reproving himself for having made light of such a subject, "The paper's all right, though—all right; she's sure to win in time."

"What is the—character of the paper? I'm a stranger here," Jerry added, hastily.

Dillingham grinned. "I reckon 'twouldn't make any difference," he said. "The paper advocates," he went on solemnly, in answer to Jerry's question; "she advocates—" He broke off and looked helplessly again at the litter on the table and the floor. Then he went over to the printer's case and took up a brass head-piece, which he brought back and handed to Jerry, saying, "You're a printer; read it."

Jerry read the title of the paper, *The New Era*, in big letters, and below, in small letters quoted, "Equal rights to all; special privileges to none."

The New Era, as Jerry learned by piecemeal, was the queer, belated fragment of an economic movement which had swept over the country like

a storm-cloud two years before, and at the further side had vanished into wrack and limbo, leaving the sky clear for other clouds. Dillingham had studied law and knew a little of medicine; he had been a brakeman on a freight-train, and miner and county judge somewhere in Dakota, and a member of the legislature, and had run a country newspaper, and drifted over the whole West until a chance volume of Henry George had stuck a stake in his sprawling, floating existence, and around that Dillingham had crystallized, so far as it was possible for him to crystallize around anything. Then the movement—now commonly called the Coxey movement—sprang up. When this astonishing movement had swept by and the waters had subsided, it was seen plainly enough that the whole strength and vitality of it lay in the elemental fact that it was a cry for rest, fulness, content piercing the hearts of men who were weary, empty, unsatisfied. Like the other editors, Dillingham mistook the queer economic theories advanced in the name of the movement for the real thing, and a mighty conviction settled down upon him that here was the truth; that he knew it, saw it, and could express it better than another. He put more faith in earnestness, sympathy, force of conviction, as a means to good expression, than he did in grammar, about which he never bothered. He happened to have a little money at the time and he came to Chicago, where he already had some acquaintance among the leaders of labor unions, and founded *The New Era*. The paper had a little boom; then

the passing of the Coxeyites left it stranded. Dillingham had never really got it afloat again, but he had managed to keep it from going to pieces.

Into the internal economy of this derelict weekly paper, then, Jerry found himself injected. At the end of a couple of weeks Dillingham said he'd been made for the place. He got the office in order, then the accounts. There was not always the \$12 in the table-drawer or in Dillingham's pocket for him Tuesday night; but he got along very well indeed moneywise, and began to draw his full breath in the city, and to stare at the people or ignore them as they stared at or ignored him.

He had found a boarding-house a dozen blocks west of *The New Era* office, where he shared his small back room with a bill-poster. Jerry had selected this place the day he went to work for Dillingham, when the meagreness of the little heap of change in the bottom of his pocket had been very present in his mind. He could afford a better place now, but he did not move. Mrs. Hess, who kept the boarding-house, was a faded little woman, always hurried yet always behindhand—behindhand with her meals, behindhand with her rent, behindhand going to bed, and infinitely in arrears with regard to that portion of ease and happiness which people think of, somehow, as among their birthrights. She was always hastening down-stairs or up-stairs or along the hall sweating from the kitchen, wiping her red hands on her wet calico apron, and making an ineffectual dab at the locks of fine, thin, yellow-grayish hair that kept straggling over her wrinkled

cheek. Jerry thought her very pathetic. Her elder daughter, Clara, helped with the work. Clara had married, but her husband had turned out badly, and she had come back with her two children. Clara was like her mother, only there were still fading traces of prettiness left, and on Sunday, when she put on a neat, presentable black gown and took the children out for a walk, she looked almost pretty, and seemed even more pathetic than her mother. The younger daughter, Mabel, lived there also ; but she worked days in a big department store down-town. The work was tiring, and she got \$6.50 a week for it. She was about eighteen—plump, yellow-haired, blue-eyed. Her cheeks were still pink, and she was so pretty that she was like a ripe peach—her bloom appeared at its height and perfection at the moment one looked at her. It seemed that in a month, a day, a touch would be lacking to the delicious pink of her cheek, to the soft, round, white fulness of her chin and throat, to the brightness of her eye, to the gloss of her hair. Jerry had heard her talk to the boarders at the table, and he thought her a doll. Yet she seemed by far the most pathetic of all. He had never spoken a dozen words to her alone, and he knew that she was receiving the attentions of the young drug clerk, who was the most important of the boarders, and who quarrelled with her all the time. Still Jerry stayed at Mrs. Hess's.

Dillingham was early in the secret of his assistant's journalistic ambition, and Jerry soon got to writing little editorial paragraphs for the paper,

and from that to dressing up the items of news which Dillingham gathered respecting labor movements, and such economic and political topics as the patrons of the sheet were supposed to be interested in. Jerry felt that he was getting on his feet. He could see things to write about, and could write about them; but he sent nothing to the newspapers. He was waiting to put in a capital stroke. Dillingham had promised to introduce him to an old acquaintance, a newspaper reporter, on whose prospective advice Jerry built a great deal. Dillingham had explained, with his priceless grin, that Jordan was pretty much out of it nowadays, and he added that they'd have to spend a couple of dollars soaking him up before he would talk much, so that Jerry was disappointed, but not much surprised, when, one afternoon in October, he found himself pumping the hand of a shabby, middle-aged man, with a puffed red face, and iron-gray whiskers, and baggy trousers that lacked something of reaching the instep of his shoes. Dillingham led the way down to the little saloon underneath the office. Jordan paused at the lunch-counter, making light of the guardianship of a long, revolving arm, with a fan at each end. Jerry and Dillingham sat down at one of the little, round, solid tables, and Dillingham ordered some beer. In a moment Jordan joined them, with a little pile of disks cut transversely from a roll of sausage in one hand, and some rye bread in the other. He did not allow the transfer of both to his mouth to interrupt the conversation.

"The newspaper business in Chicago, Mr. Drew," said he, "has gone to the dogs. The newspapers are run by a lot of dry-goods counter-bargain men, and edited by a lot of pin-headed dudes." He peeled a couple of sausage disks, throwing the casings over his shoulder to the sanded floor as though it were a kind of rite, and he paused a moment with his eye on the beer as it came gurgling in a cool, pleasant way from the bottle into the glass.

"Who've they got that can write?" he demanded, having decanted a glassful of beer into his mouth and corked it with a sausage disk, so that his words came out with half their features rubbed off.

Jordan talked of the different newspapers, and of the men who owned and edited them, prefixing nicknames and speaking of details in an intimate way that made Jerry's blood tingle pleasantly. As the drink warmed him up he began telling of his own experience—a strange jumble: interviews with famous men and drunken rows on the levee, political conventions that were historical, and other episodes known only to the annals of "Little Hell" and the police-courts. Many of the men he told of were of national fame; others were well known locally. He told of some of his triumphs, as how he and Teddy Gilmore scooped the town on the arrest of the Colebaugh murderers, which they found out about through having been let into the captain's office at the police-station by a friendly sergeant to sleep and get sober. Jerry noticed that all of the reminiscences were of ten or twenty years

back. Noting the veinous cheeks, the trampish attire, he forbore to ask why.

"But it's all gone to the devil now," Jordan declared. "There's no show for a man of talent, no originality, no *esprit de corps*, no genius. Why, the other day I asked a *Clarion* man to meet me at Fatty Johnson's place, and the fellow asked where that was! A skate in a new box-coat, with a chrysanthemum at his button-hole! In my time you can bet the boys knew where Fatty's place was. Why, more pay-checks went over Fatty's bar in a week than went into the cashier's window at the newspaper office."

"But there must be the same opportunity for good work," Jerry urged; "there's as much material to write up."

"Oh, there's an ocean of material," Jordan assented; "but nobody knows how to handle it. Material! Say, if you want some material just write up this stuff I've been telling you. You can make a pageful of it. Call it 'Recollections of an Old Reporter,' or something of that sort. Some managing editor will light his pipe with it; but you're at liberty to try it."

"Do you mean it?" said Jerry, eagerly.

"Sure," said Jordan, who was no longer quite sober.

"I'll do it!" Jerry cried.

Jordan held out his hand. "Go in," he cried; "write it up. Maybe it'll go. If you get a job you may catch on and work something out of it. A man does, now and then. Try it."

Jerry tried it. He had sense enough to work up every bit in which a famous name figured, especially a famous local name. He called it, as Jordan had suggested, "Recollections of an Old Reporter;" but he left out Jordan's personality. He sent it to *The Evening Call*, a new paper that was fighting for a place, with a note asking for a position. He went about holding his breath for two days. Then he got a thin envelope with *The Evening Call* in blue letters on the corner, and inside a slip from the managing editor asking him to call at three o'clock any afternoon. He went that afternoon.

On the way back he walked so heedlessly that a crossings policeman had to pull him from before a street-car, while the gripman swore at him, and the policeman called him a fool in an annoyed way. But Jerry didn't mind them. He simply plunged ahead. He kept grinning to himself. At *The New Era* office he ran up-stairs breathlessly.

"Well, I'm going to work for the *Call* Monday morning," he said.

Dillingham scratched his head, and glanced around the office. "Don't know how I'll get along without you," he said, dubiously. "If you'd a stayed a little longer we'd a fixed up a partnership as soon as the paper got on its feet—and that won't be long now. But, of course, if this other's what you want to do—" He broke off, and arose and held out his hand, his blue eyes twinkling fondly down at Jerry. "My boy, I wish you luck," he said.

There was one other person whom Jerry wished to tell. He saw her through the doorway to the

shabby little parlor as he came down the hall. She was standing by the front window looking out, her back to him. He saw that she had not heard him, so he returned stealthily to the front door, and opened and closed it noisily, and came heavily down the hall. He paused at the door, and the girl looked around.

"Good-evening, Miss Hess," he said, with a sensible pulsation in his chest, and went in.

"Good-evening," said Mabel, turning around and waiting, smiling pleasantly. It struck him, as it had before, that she would never again be quite as pretty as she was at that moment. There was that about her which made the idea of toil, denial, servitude, incongruous. Everybody felt it, and the boarders, under the spell of it, treated her clerking as a joke. Jerry's room-mate, the bill-poster, frequently asked her whether she had lifted any stoves or weighed out much sugar that day. Then he would laugh violently, until he choked on his bread. Jerry always frowned at his plate then.

"You're home pretty early to-night?" Mabel asked, politely.

"Yes, I'm getting ready to leave," said Jerry.

"To leave us?" the girl cried.

"No, to leave the printing-office. I'm going to work for *The Evening Call*."

"Do they pay more?" Mabel asked, simply.

It seemed to Jerry a very inadequate view of it, and he was conscious of a disappointment. But he answered, simply, "Some more."

"You're not going to leave us, then?" she asked,

with an interest which he referred honestly and sadly to a vulgar regard for the board money.

"Perhaps not," he said, a little vengefully; "that will depend on how the work is."

"I don't suppose that would make any difference—I mean about your staying here. I know mamma would be awfully sorry to have you go—and Clara would, too."

"Yes, I'd be sorry to go," said Jerry, taking his disappointment out into the hall.

When they were all around the table Mabel brought up the subject again—to Jerry's embarrassment. "Mr. Drew is going to work for *The Evening Call*, ma," she said. It seemed to Jerry like handing his precious confidence over to the boarders, as though she had no use for it herself.

"Why, Georgie Turner worked for *The Evening Call*," said Clara.

"So he did; I'd forgotten it," said Mabel. Then, turning to Jerry, she explained: "But he worked in the business office, not in the composing-room."

Jerry thought it would be silly and boastful for him to say that he was going to work as a reporter, not as a printer. So he gathered his dignity about him, to hide the rents in it, and said nothing. He had an impression that Mabel had used him very badly, and under the impetus of that idea he went up to his little room, set the lamp on the washstand, from which he took the bowl and pitcher to make room, and prepared to write a long letter to Elsie—a letter he should have written a month be-

fore. He thought rather sadly of Mabel. He thought of going away and of meeting her by chance about a year afterwards, when he had become famous in some mysterious way. From that he thought of other things—endless processions of them—in which there was always a fair young figure with yellow hair and blue eyes.

Presently the bill-poster came in and said, "Hello! been writing a letter?"

"I'm going to write one," said Jerry, straightening up quickly.

"Goin' to! Why, man, it's past eleven o'clock," said the bill-poster.

The sheets of blank paper stared up at Jerry reproachfully. "I'm a whelp! an unspeakable whelp!" he thought, as he whisked the accusing paper out of sight. "I'll write to-morrow."

IV

MR. BRINSLEY, managing editor of *The Evening Call*, had told Jerry to come at 8 o'clock Monday morning, and he was just taking off his coat as Jerry came in.

The managing editor looked at the young fellow a minute as one looks at a stranger. Then he remembered, and told him to sit down, and went out. Jerry was deeply curious respecting his surroundings, and he had ample time to indulge his curiosity before Brinsley returned. *The Evening Call* was rather pretentiously housed for a new paper, but the editorial rooms were a series of cubby-holes opening from a long hall. The managing editor's room was half filled by a big desk, with a remarkable number of things on it. There was a stack of unopened letters, and a pile of others that had been opened and spread flat under a weight. There were manuscripts and photographs and a pile of metal cuts, and from the rows of pigeon-holes above ends of other manuscripts protruded.

In about half an hour Brinsley returned. He was short, as to stature, and thick. He had a swarthy complexion and a close-clipped, dark mustache, and his manner of moving and speaking indicated one who knew himself and trusted himself.

Without noticing Jerry he sat down at the desk and touched a button. A bell sounded down the hall. Then, not looking at Jerry, the managing editor began opening letters. A boy appeared at the door. "Ask Mr. Rexford to step in here," said Brinsley, going on with his work.

In a moment a young man came to the door, holding a pen in his hand and scowling mechanically with impatience.

"Mr. Rexford," said Brinsley, going ahead with the letters, "this is Mr. Drew, the young man I spoke to you about." He paused to glance at an enclosure which fell from one of the letters as he opened it. "Take him in hand and see what he can do for us," he added, his eyes on the letter.

Mr. Rexford fell back from the doorway, and Jerry joined him in the hall.

"Just go down to the third door," said Rexford, pointing, "and go in and sit down; I'll send for you when I want you."

Jerry found that easy enough. He went into a larger room with windows on two sides, and a row of desks around three walls. A couple of young men were writing, and three or four more stood together at the other side talking noisily. In a minute a boy came to the door and sung out a name and disappeared, and one of the young men followed him. Again, after a minute, the boy came and called another name, in the same way, and another man went. Soon Jerry was left alone. It got on towards nine o'clock, and he began to think the city editor had forgotten him. He was consid-

ering whether he should not give a reminder of his existence when the boy came to the door and said "Hey!" at Jerry, and held up a finger authoritatively and disappeared. Jerry went to the city editor's room. Rexford handed him a despatch, telling that a Chicago man had been arrested for forgery in Minneapolis. It gave a name, and a street and number. "Go over there," said the city editor, "and find out all you can about this man—what business he's in, and whether he has a family, and how long he's been gone, and whether he's been in trouble before, and whether the people at this address know he's been arrested, and what they know about the charge, and everything you can."

Jerry found the place easily enough, and the sign, "For Rent," in the window. No one was about, and the agent whose address was given in the "For Rent" sign had never heard of the man arrested. Jerry went back, disappointed, and reported.

"All right," said Rexford, and Jerry went down to the empty room. About twelve o'clock Rexford sent for him again. An Indian nabob was coming to visit a well-known local merchant, and the city editor wished to know when the nabob was to arrive. Jerry found out from the merchant, and extracted some information about the nabob besides. Rexford made a note of the date and train, and said the information had all been printed, and sent Jerry back to the big room.

Reporters began coming in. Each one glanced anxiously at the clock on the wall before he sat down to write. Boys ran in and ran out again

with the copy, and there was a perpetual quarrel between the boys and the reporters. Now and then Rexford appeared and quarrelled impartially with the boys and the writers.

The tall clock on the wall seemed to be winding up the nerves of everybody. With every spent quarter of an hour the tension became greater, the pace faster. Reporters came in out of breath, flung their coats anywhere, and scribbled for their lives. The boys trotted in and out. Rexford rushed in, his face screwed in a nervous scowl, and complained of something in a voice high and plaintive from excitement. Brinsley came to the door. "Come, now! hustle up that explosion stuff!" he said, as one giving a command, and hastened away. The three telephones in the city editor's room rung incessantly. The bell at the end of the hall tinkled every minute. A gong over the door in the big room rung out with slow, harsh strokes, which a boy counted and ran away to tell the city editor about.

After a while the strain ceased. The reporters lounged in the chairs and on the desks talking. The clock struck three, and they went in a body to the city editor's room, leaving Jerry alone again, weary, faint with hunger, and disappointed.

In a few minutes he saw Rexford come into the hall with his hat and coat on. The city editor caught sight of Jerry, and called to him "Nothing more to-day." Perhaps he guessed the new reporter's disappointment. At any rate, he waited

for Jerry to come up to him, and he said, in an encouraging way, "I'll find something for you to do to-morrow."

On the way to the elevator, and going down, he asked Jerry a number of questions about himself, and at parting he repeated, "I'll find something for you to do to-morrow," reassuringly, so that Jerry's disappointment vanished. Standing at the foot of the elevator shaft, he looked down the long, handsome stretch of the business office, where a score of clerks worked at the rosewood counters, where people were constantly going and coming. The muffled roar of the presses came up to him from a subterranean place, filling him with a pleasant sense of the power of the great engine of which he was a part. He went out into the crowded street light-hearted, confident in spite of some nervous speculation as to what the morrow's task would be—remembering his frightful experience with the butcher's meeting.

Jerry found the tasks neither abstruse nor beyond his strength—found that the doing of them required neither magic nor esoteric knowledge, but only diligence, patience, alertness. These he had, and, besides, an enthusiasm in the work at first for the work's own sake. So he got on, and became a man of importance on the paper. Brinsley discovered a talent in him for writing editorial paragraphs, and gave him that to do besides some reporting. He got to doing some special articles, and in time these were made a sort of feature of the paper. He felt himself a man of some conse-

quence in the institution, and his wage was \$30 a week. It had taken three years' work.

"I ought to have some sense by this time; I'm twenty-four," he complained, discontentedly, to Bashford, coming out of the newspaper office.

He was not good at making friends. He had many acquaintances, and he was fond of some of them; but only Bashford knew about Tampico. Bashford was thirty, blond, athletic, and smooth-shaven. Probably only Jerry knew that he had a wife and child in Canada.

"This work scoops everything out of you day by day and throws it away," Jerry went on, grumbling.

"Yes, that's so," said Bashford. "The newspaper is a big lemon-squeezer. It takes out the juice and tosses you away. But then we lemons have no need to complain of that; it's what we're good for—to be squeezed." They turned into an ally and sought the side entrance to a wide, cool place below stairs.

"I prefer to dribble my juice," Jerry growled. "I don't care to have all the good taken out of me at one clip. I don't care to become a rind before I get whiskers. Two." The last to the white-aproned waiter. "The trouble is the stuff is so ephemeral. Putting a thing in a newspaper is like charring a sheet of paper—it crumbles to nothing, floats away just of itself. I'd like to get a little quality of permanency here and there—something that lasted."

"That's a short-sighted view," said Bashford.

"The beauty of newspaper work is its instability. You worked yesterday, but to-day there's nothing to remind you of it; all the evidence of your servitude is mercifully spread out of sight on the pantry shelves and under the carpets; there's no unpleasant clank of the chains behind you. Think of writing a dozen imperishable books and having them stare down at you from the shelves, forever reminding you of the good times you'd missed. There's nothing in your foolish gospel of work. A mule works—and kicks about it just as a man does."

Bashford, instead of smiling, gave a little sigh, and dropped his white, muscular hand on the table like one tired, and slid a little farther down in his chair. Each of them had something to think of, and they sipped at their beer silently, and thought without trying to make talk, so intimate was their friendship.

Bashford was thinking of a girl he had stood beside the day before. He looked down at her, and after a moment she looked up and away again swiftly. And suddenly something had struck through to an inner consciousness—something that was like a definite knowledge that he was forever too late; that he had arrived after the curtain had been rung down and the lights turned out; that he had missed, beyond recovery, some indefinable thing he longed for, possession of which would make him well, happy, peaceful.

Jerry was thinking of Tampico; Elsie; of the great, foolish dreams he had indulged; of how

much he had expected to do in three years and a half, and of how little he had actually done.

The backward glimpse lasted but a moment. It was a phase of the increasing unrest, dissatisfaction, that fretted him. He felt that he was doing nothing worth while. Newspaper work was, after all, only another man's work. He was expressing Brinsley, the managing editor, or Tuthill, the proprietor, whereas he wished to express himself. It had come to him very slowly, but very convincingly, that he was more the hired man on *The Evening Call* than he had been on the *Tampico Herald*. The trouble was it seemed hard to get hold of anything permanent, of anything that would be his personally. He had thought of saving up money and starting a weekly paper—but it would take a good deal of money.

The two young men got up presently, and lingered a moment over lighting their cigarettes, and another moment on the stairs; then parted, Bashford going slowly up the street, while Jerry went briskly the other way.

V

JERRY went briskly because there was something to do, and he had overstayed his time. He was in the confidence of the management to a degree. There had been a decision in the United States Court affecting a point which had been raised in a libel suit against the paper, and Jerry was going to get a copy of the decision. As he walked along he kept thinking of what the newspaper work had done for him. He was well-dressed. He had some money in his pocket, and some more in the savings-bank. He knew that he had been disciplined to an extent. When he looked at the future it was no longer a mere riot of purple; it had begun falling somewhat into order. He had a ground of actual experience and observation under his feet now, and his speculations were projected somewhat in consonance with it. He had not run that daily life-and-death race with the presses for a hundred and fifty weeks for nothing. He could do things with far greater speed and precision. Such talents as he had were more available. On the other hand, he wondered whether he were not being changed from a reflecting man to a merely acting one. He knew that he had lost something.

A trampish-looking man, smelling of liquor, shuffled from the mouth of an alley where he had been lurking and began mumbling, "Can you help me get something to eat—"

Jerry shook his head impatiently and strode on; but even as he did it he knew that three years and a half ago he could not have dismissed the vagabond so lightly. His country-bred interest in strangers was distinctly less, then; some fresh, wholesome perceptions had been hopelessly blunted. A villany no longer struck him with the force of a personal offence—no longer roused his resentment burningly as it had once done. When one knows of a dozen villainies every day he cannot stop to get angry over each one. He had built himself up on the paper by spending himself with prodigality. His life had really been very laborious. He worked daytimes, and often evenings and Sundays. As he glanced back it seemed a rather dreary retrospect of dull plodding. It came to him, bringing a kind of fright and a start of anger, that he was missing his youth, missing his happiness. He had moved from Mrs. Hess's long ago, and Bashford was almost his only recreation. A sense of intolerable dullness, emptiness, came upon him as he turned into the grimy federal building. He thought of going over to Mrs. Hess's that evening. Of course it was Mabel whom he had in mind. He had not seen her for months. It seemed to him that he had not seen any nice girl in months, and he felt it an immense loss.

Court had adjourned, and neither clerk nor

bailiff was at hand. The door to Judge House's chambers stood open, however, and Jerry went across the court-room and into the private apartment, expecting to find the judge or an officer of the court.

The inner room, too, seemed empty. It was a high, spacious room with a solid, dignified air. The window-shades were pulled down, toning the bright sunlight to the staid, dignified character of the room. One shade, that at the farther window, was not quite down. A screen stood by that window, and from behind it came the slow clicking of a type-writer. Jerry's feet made no sound on the thick carpet, so he coughed, then advanced towards the screen.

The clicking stopped, and a young woman came out from behind the screen. Jerry guessed her age at twenty, and admired her trim, graceful, prettily gowned figure before he had a chance to observe her face. She was dark, with grayish-dark eyes and clear white skin, and even in the first glance at her he noted a little curving and dimpling at the corners of her mouth which instantly suggested the characteristic of sweetness.

Judge House was not in, she said, in a voice that enforced the suggestion of the mouth. She thought he would be in soon. Jerry found it pleasant to have her bright eyes glancing at him, so he explained: "I'm from *The Evening Call*, and I came to get a copy of the judge's decision in that Dexter case."

She stood a moment, tapping her chin with the

end of her pencil. "I could give you a copy," she said, thoughtfully; then she added, in a frank, companionable way, smiling, "but I don't know that I ought to."

"Can't I persuade you that you ought?" said Jerry.

They laughed together, and Jerry felt quite at ease. "If you'll wait a moment," she said, "I'm sure papa will be in."

Jerry caught himself staring, for Judge House was almost a swell, and he remembered vaguely having seen things about a Miss House in the society columns.

Probably she's the clerk's daughter, he thought; so he said, "If I knew where to find the clerk no doubt I could get it of him."

"I think Mr. Melvin has gone for the day," said the girl.

Then Jerry stared again and sat down quite meekly.

The girl seemed by no means so much impressed. She stood over by the table looking at him with candid interest. "I thought something was printed in the papers about that decision," she said.

Jerry told her why he wished the copy, and that suggested a number of things she did not understand. He went over to the table to show her how the proof-reader marked the sheets for revision.

When Judge House came in he saw his daughter standing in front of a strange young man, who was telling her how the anarchists found Fitzpatrick at their meeting and locked him in the coal-bin,

Judge House was in the prime of life. There was a threat of obesity about his neck and the lower part of his face, especially when he sat down and his smooth, rosy cheeks came against the edge of his standing collar. He made the very most of the little grayish hair there was on top of his head. Many persons would have called him handsome. Every one would have said that he was extremely well-appearing and that he lived well.

The sight of his daughter laughing with the strange young man seemed not particularly pleasant to the judge. He came on towards his desk in a dignified way. The young man dropped his story and self-possession and flushed a little. The young woman seemed not to mind at all. She went over to her screen.

Jerry got his copy of the decision, and went back to the office with it in his hand. He kept thinking of the girl, without any purpose or direction in his thoughts, and only because he found her pleasant to think of.

"Hey, Drew!" Brinsley called, and Jerry, thus brought up short, wheeled around mechanically and stepped into the managing editor's room.

"Did you get that decision?" Brinsley asked.

Then Jerry remembered with a flush of guilt that it was to give Brinsley the decision that he had come back to the office. The decision was crumpled in his hand. He passed it over, mumbling an apology.

VI

Two or three days later Jerry told Bashford about meeting Judge House's daughter, taking care to bring it in quite incidentally. Bashford laughed at the picture of the judge's ruffled dignity.

"I once heard him sentence a man who had thrown a rock through a mail-car," said Bashford. "His heart is a rotten apple. Old House, his father, was a pioneer, a road-maker, a fighter, a law-maker. He was one of your long-limbed, knotty-fisted, hard-headed Yankees. He came here in the forties, and helped make this town. He was all right, the old man was. He married Betty Potvin, so the judge's patent of nobility is good on both sides. I've a notion the judge is rather ashamed of his father—wishes he'd stayed back in Vermont, so his son could have pretended he was a sort of aristocrat."

"They say the judge is a scholarly man," said Jerry, subtly offended.

"He went to Yale, and he probably keeps a Latin book or two on his library table. So the girl is pretty, is she?"

"Yes," said Jerry, simply; "she's pretty—and nice, too."

"Probably takes after her mother," Bashford

suggested. He was thoughtful a moment; then he said, also incidentally, "I saw a smashing pretty girl myself the other day—absolutely a peach. Not a judge's daughter, though; she was behind the necktie counter in the Mammoth Store—like a La France rose in a box of bone collar-buttons. The beasts!"

Knowing Bashford, Jerry said, without surprise, "Who?"

"Everybody," said Bashford. "That girl is pink and white, blooming, beautiful. The idea of putting her in that store! The slave-market was a mighty sight better."

They were sitting in Bashford's room under the lofty eaves of *The Evening Call* building. Through the broad, low window they looked down on a tangle of blackened roofs and chimneys. Across the block an unfinished sky-scraper reared its gigantic skeleton to a level with their altitude. Scores of workmen scrawled, sat, ran, climbed, hammered, soldered over the great bare steel beams, careless of the hundred feet sheer down to the pavement. Over the whole bird's-eye prospect here and there vast buildings—fifteen, sixteen, eighteen stories high—shouldered up above the common pack. Opposite their eerie an alley through a block of brick and masonry opened like a crack in a mountain. Beyond all the buildings they could see a pale-green patch of lake front; then the broad, low expanse of the lake out to the arched horizon. To their view the great town overwhelmed the lake, and this effect was strengthened immensely by a little

black line in the near edge of the great stretch of gray water—the line of the government breakwater—as though the triumphing town had already set up a picket and outpost in the lake.

“Beasts!” Bashford repeated, as though he found a pleasure in calling the name.

Suddenly Jerry remembered Mabel. He was on the point of saying that he knew a pretty girl in the Mammoth Store, but it seemed not worth while. He looked at his watch instead.

“Going somewhere?” Bashford asked.

“No,” said Jerry—“that is, nowhere in particular.”

“I couldn’t go with you, anyhow,” said Bashford, laughing.

“Oh, it’s nothing,” said Jerry; “just a little business—for the paper.”

“I said you needn’t apologize,” Bashford replied.

Jerry laughed in a self-conscious, unsuccessful way. He put on his hat and got up, and lingered a minute as though he would take away the bad taste of his refusal of Bashford’s company. Then he went out.

He looked at his watch again on the way down. It was ten minutes to four, which he judged to be full thirty minutes too early. He had never found thirty minutes so hard to get rid of. Each successive one of them came up and offered itself to him separately as he lounged in the doorway. He walked slowly to the corner of Clark Street, and put in an hour watching the jeweller’s clock tick off eighty seconds. He paused in front of a dime

museum, and examined all of the signs and banners with care. Using such devices to kill time it was still only a quarter after four when he entered the government building. He loafed in the lobby until a watchman looked at him suspiciously. Then he went over and took up a position in the angle of the corridors, where he could watch both the elevators and have the whole length of the west lobby to retreat in if he found that course expedient. In a minute a stoutish, well-clad man with a very shiny silk hat came out of the elevator. Jerry saw him turn towards the door; then he ran across and went up in the same elevator.

The court-room was empty; the door to the judge's chamber stood ajar, and as Jerry walked towards it his heart thumped at his side as though he were going to make a speech.

He had seen the girl but once; but that once was in a way that projected her sharply upon his imagination, besides being coincident with the recurrence of a poignant sense of emptiness in his life. Almost before he had got out of her presence he had begun thinking how pleasant it would be to see her often, to have her for his friend. His unemployed imaginings, running on from this, feigned meetings, confidences, sympathies. By the time he got home that night he was thinking of her quite tenderly. The next day he thought, in mere day-dreaming at first, how he might meet her. Pretexts came to his mind. Finally he decided to try to meet her. Because he had anticipated it, dreamed of it, solaced his heart with it, he was

agitated now that his plan was coming to the test. The actual young woman was not very clear to him, nor very important. He was even in doubt as to the color of her eyes. He remembered her trimness, grace, vivacity; but he did not remember how she was dressed. His impulse flowed strongly towards her because it lacked other direction at the moment.

Nobody sat at the judge's desk. Jerry saw that first. Then he saw Georgia House standing in front of a tiny mirror tucked in the window-casing, with a white, beflowered hat in her hand. He noticed at once, with a little surprise, that she was rather taller than he had supposed.

"Good-afternoon," said Jerry, as she looked around and smiled in the frank, companionable way he remembered.

"Did the decision fit your case?" she asked.

"To a T," said Jerry; "we're grateful to the judge for finding out that the law was just what we needed it to be."

"I'll tell him," said the girl. "I believe he'll feel flattered. The newspapers mostly find the decisions regrettable, don't they?"

She held the hat with her left hand, while with the right she drove a long, black pin through the sides of it.

"Everything is disappointing to the newspapers," said Jerry; "but I believe everything was to the prophets, too."

She whirled around, showing her white teeth, her eyes shining with a kind of mischievous appre-

ciation. "Everything?" she said. "I don't see how they could possibly find their self-satisfaction disappointing."

"The prophets?" Jerry asked, laughing. He put his hand in his coat-pocket on something that rustled and crumpled, and he did not take it out—in fact, the lie which he had carefully devised seemed useless now that he was face to face with her; for he had told Brinsley, without blushing, that Judge House wished the copy of the decision returned, and he had carefully thought out how he would hand it over to her as the explanation of his call.

"Let it go at the prophets," she said, gayly. Her veil and gloves lay on the end of the type-writer table in Jerry's view, as he stood by Judge House's desk. She did not move to pick them up, but stood where she could reach them at any time. She was looking at him, smiling, and Jerry saw that the minutes were his so long as he could fairly win them.

At that moment a slight cough sounded at the door, and Melvin, the clerk, came shuffling in—a dry little man with a little white mustache and deep-set eyes having dark marks under them.

"Oh! hello, hello, how d' do?" he said to Jerry, affably, ducking his little white head and holding out his dry, feverish hand. "How's the newspaper business nowadays? How's *The Evening Call*?" The clerk gabbled on affably, smiling inexorably.

"Oh, it's all right," said Jerry, looking at the little man and thinking with bitterness what a re-

finement of deviltry it was that such a poor, small creature should have the power to be so much in the way.

"Scooping 'em, I suppose?" said the clerk, doubling his little body back at the joke. "What's become of Jim Prescott? There was a bright reporter for you!"

"He's at Dwight," said Jerry, with a kind of bitter gladness in the tidings.

Georgia turned away to the window and stood looking out, her hands behind her back. "She'll give me a minute and a half to get rid of this wretch," Jerry thought.

Melvin lifted his chin and took off his glasses. "I remember Prescott five years ago," he said, still with his faded smile. "He did that Telford arson case—famous case. Well, there was a decision coming on an important objection raised by Colonel Westley—let's see, was it Westley? Yes, Westley, and Jim, you know—"

The little man, his chin lifted, still smiling, tapped Jerry's breast in a friendly way with his eye-glasses.

Georgia came back to the end of the screen and picked up her veil. Jerry watched every motion from the corner of his eye as she put up her slim white hands and fastened the gauzy, foolish thing very slowly. She took the veil off and adjusted it again, and all the while Melvin, chuckling, twisting his glasses, laying his mummy fingers on Jerry's arm, went on buzzing something Jerry did not hear.

The girl drew on one glove and buttoned it; then the other, slowly. Jerry's heart sank. He felt so

deeply disappointed that it quite humbled him, and he tried to listen civilly to Melvin. A form came in the doorway. Judge House, erect, stoutish, was in the room with all his dignity. Georgia turned towards the door.

Melvin broke off abruptly. "Yes, here's the judge," he said, bustling with his puny officialism. "Here's the judge. Young gentleman from *The Evening Call*, judge."

Judge House paused, questioning, looking at Jerry, as one who could not be expected to know of either *The Evening Call* or its young gentlemen, but was courteous to all comers.

Jerry, damning the clerk more than ever, pulled the copy of the decision out of his pocket, turned red, and handed it over to the judge. "I brought back this copy of your decision," he mumbled; "we're much obliged."

At that moment Georgia, her eyes on the floor, passed them going out.

"You needn't have done that; I thought I told you," said the judge, dropping the paper on his desk.

It came over Jerry, as a revelation, that she was going away—in an instant would be gone. He turned quite desperate. "I didn't understand you," he said, and bolted for the door. The court-room was empty, but the outer door was just swinging shut. Jerry ran across. The girl was going down the corridor, and as his hurrying feet struck the sounding tile floor she looked around. Seeing who it was she walked more slowly, and he overtook her half-way to the elevator. She seemed both to take

him for granted and to make no particular account of him, as though he had been a youngster or a servant, and he found her attitude both pleasant and tantalizing. He began talking emptily about the ruinous condition of the building, marvelling all the while at her round, soft cheek, at the way her dark hair curved up from her white neck. The elevator was crowded, so that she was pushed away from him, and they walked with the other passengers out through the lobby and down the broad steps to Adams Street. It was only when they reached the flagging that he regained his place alone by her side. He saw that she was turning east. "It's a miserable old heap," he said, glancing back at the building; and before he knew what he was about he lifted his hat, turned west, and walked away quickly.

After he had taken a half-dozen steps he began regretting it, and by the time he reached the corner he was raging vainly at his own inconceivable stupidity in parting from her. He rubbed the sore spot by imagining how far he might have gone with her. Then suddenly a cross-wind blew upon him. "What difference does it make, anyhow, whether I walk with her a rod or a mile?" he asked himself, and it truly seemed that it made no difference at all.

VII

NOTWITHSTANDING it made no difference, Jerry took care to be at the corner of Clark and Adams streets every afternoon at a quarter after four. He would walk very slowly across to Dearborn Street, his eye on the dingy steps to the government building; then very swiftly around the other three sides of the block, and very slowly again in front of the post-office; after which he would rush away somewhere calling himself names to hide his disappointment.

On the eighth day, which was Monday, he plunged recklessly across Dearborn Street, away from the sight of the dirty, squat government building, pursued by a sense of having been caught in something disreputable, humiliating. "It's absurd!" he told himself; "I'll not come loafing and hankering around here every day like a dog hoping for a bone."

For an unreasoning moment he blamed Georgia House, as though she had somehow been wilfully tantalizing and betraying him.

He went on to State Street, and drifted into the swift current of it. The shoppers were out in force. The broad flagging on either side, from Washington Street down to Congress, was thronged with humanity—largely feminine humanity—bent on bargains in

prints and pots. He knew the panorama well enough, and liked it. The cream flowed around the two sides of Field's, at the corner of Washington. There were smartly dressed women going and coming through the wide entrances with the air of those who are waited upon. There were long lines of handsome carriages on either side the street—the real coachmen sitting straight, conscious of their dignity, and those who were merely hired from the public stables along with the conveyances lounging on their boxes, perhaps boldly smoking suspicious cigars. At the Fair a throng of another sort crowded in to buy or crowded out, frayed from the battle at the counters and laden with parcels. At every point of vantage up and down the stretch there was a man with a box of collar-buttons and a bundle of shoelaces, or a tiny fruit-stand, or a news-store, two feet wide, at the edge of the curbing, or the pocketable establishment of the vender of glue and gilding. Knots of people constantly gathered before the broad show-windows piled with merchandise arranged in fantastic designs.

As the four streams poured endlessly, two on a side, going and coming, nobody noticed any other body except the other body were a pretty woman. Every other sort of human atom lost its distinction in the long, fluid pack—became simply an untagged atom, trousered or skirted; was jostled, elbowed, ignored. The wisest man or the best might as well have been the dullest or the worst for all the notice he got. But the course of a jaunty type-writer girl was a sort of triumphal procession. She struck

sparks all along the flinty line. A train of admiring masculine glances followed her wake as waves in the wake of a steamer.

Jerry moralized about it as he went along, his hands in his pockets. As he moralized he became aware of the perfect type of such a commotion-maker as he had been thinking of coming towards him with an effect of suddenness as though she had materialized there, had suddenly bloomed out in white and delicate pink and yellow in front of him. It was Mabel Hess. She had seen him first, and was smiling and holding out her hand.

"You must go home earlier than you used to," he said.

"I am not working any more," she replied, simply.

He vaguely felt a catastrophe, and shied away from it. At the same time he began to realize a change in her—something gone from the old spirit of airiness; a hint of one refurbishing too many in her hat; of last season in her gown; a touch less of plumpness and pinkness in her cheek. The hour's defect in the rose was upon her. It shocked him and struck him tragically. For that reason he began telling all about where he was boarding, and some other things that neither cared about, as they walked down to the corner. He asked about Mrs. Hess.

"She's better now," said the girl; "she's been sick a long time."

That, too, shocked Jerry, so he muttered some empty words of regret. "I've been going over to

see her for a long time," he said ; "but somehow I haven't found time—I've put it off."

"I wish you would come," said Mabel, and her tone made a sort of personal appeal. In a burst of sympathy and self-reproach Jerry suggested that he go at once. He noticed that she did not offer to stop at the corner where they could take a street-car. He glanced at the flat purse in her hand and divined the reason. He stopped, however, and she sat down in the car with a little sigh of relief and a palpable relaxation of tired muscle. It came out, partly in the car and partly in the shabby little front parlor which he had not seen for a year and a half, how she had been to see about a place, about two or three places, but had found none ; how her mother had been sick ; how Clara's older child, Freddy, had been sick. Mrs. Hess came in, wan and enfeebled, and the details came out in a series of mutual loving accusations between the mother and daughter.

"I should have left the store before I did," said Mabel. "You know you overdid, ma, trying to do all the work and help take care of Freddy and wait on me—great fat thing like me—and that's what brought it on ; the doctor says so."

"'Twas the grippe, Mabel," Mrs. Hess protested. "I don't believe the work would have made any difference. I wasn't reconciled to your giving up your place the way you did at all."

"I guess it wouldn't have made any difference whether you was reconciled or not—to them," Mabel replied.

"But what I think, Mabel, if you had gone to them and told 'em why you wanted to stay away a while, instead of just leaving, they'd have taken you back."

"Much time I had to talk to anybody, with Freddy about dying and you the way you was!" cried the girl, scornfully. "Ma Hess, you talk as though you didn't want me around the house."

The shabby, wasted little figure in the old horse-hair arm-chair drooped forward; a thin, yellowish hand clasped the chair arm, from the upholstering on which a bunch of the stuffing protruded. "I didn't want you doing the work you have been doing, Mabel," said the mother. "'Taint the sort of work I ever wanted you to do. It drags a woman down, that sort of work does, and it makes her get washed out and wrinkled."

"Pooh!" said Mabel, contemptuously; but Jerry noticed that she hid her hands in her lap. He had noticed before that they were reddened and roughened.

"What was Freddy sick with?" he asked.

"The grippe, I guess," said Mrs. Hess. "He was real poorly, just real poorly for a while. Well, in fact, the doctor almost gave him up. Then he got a little better, and Clara fixed to take him out to the country—out to her pa's folks for a while, and he's doing real well now. They are coming back in October, and we hope he'll be all right then. How you been doing, Mr. Drew?"

Jerry gave a very poor account of himself. Perhaps it was illogical, but he felt that he had coolly

walked off with the bread in his pocket and left these people to starve, and that any hint of prosperity on his part would be like taunting them with the fact. Along with his self-reproach he began thinking what he could do to help them at once. He promised himself that he would make interest to get Mabel a place, and he was on the point of asking if he could come back there and board. He was on the point of it, but something restrained him.

The something, which he had not let himself define at the moment, came uppermost in his mind very distinctly and powerfully the next day when among the answers to his advertisement for a lodging on the North side he found one offering a room on Heine Street. Heine Street crosses Dearborn Avenue a few blocks below Lincoln Park. In a city directory one item read: "House, Albert M., Judge U. S. Circuit Court, h. 1107 Dearborn Av."—which was almost at the corner of Heine Street. Indeed, this same item seemed to appear in all the city directories. Jerry had hunted it out in at least seven different volumes. He took the lodging on Heine Street near Dearborn Avenue, although it was not so good as his old lodging, and it cost more. And the tragedy of the Hesses stood away from him. He saw it, and knew it; but it was apart from him—it did not grip him, oppress him as at first. He was too near Georgia House, and too happy over the fact for that.

He did go to see the Hesses again, however, one evening a couple of weeks later, when he was feel-

ing blue and lonesome. He had done nothing towards getting Mabel a position. He had not found time. She struck him as more cheerful than she had been, and Mrs. Hess said that the reports from Freddy were very encouraging. He caught a new sense of the singular, almost pathetic confidence between the mother and daughter, without a touch of authority on the one hand, or of submission on the other, but as between two friends who were devoted to each other with a fuller trust and generosity than any friendship knows of. It struck him, too, that he judged the girl too lightly. When he arose to go he felt definitely that the last minute, errant, lingering spark of romance, or potential romance, had gone out of his feeling for her; but he liked her and honored her a great deal.

As he was going something on the mantel took his eye, and in an instant he was aware of a photograph standing conspicuously in a little gilt frame beside the little nickel-plated clock—a photograph of Bashford.

Perhaps he started; anyway, the girl saw what he was looking at—saw something in his face as he glanced around. She said nothing; but, as though it were quite incidental, stepped over to the mantel and brushed her handkerchief lightly over the photograph, as though it were something she cared for, and she set the little gilt frame up straighter.

“You must come again, Mr. Drew,” was all she said.

Jerry went out with a hot spot in his heart, blaming Bashford.

VIII

"WE are all being eaten up by selfishness," said Dillingham ; and he added a number of profane, unprintable variations of that theory. Dillingham was hopelessly given to profanity in an eruptive, volcanic sort of way. His voice was mild, and he spoke with gentle deliberation until he came to something that moved him, then he suddenly boiled over with startling blasphemies. The course of his conversation was like that of a river steamer, which silently pushes its nose down the current until it strikes a sand-bar ; then the bell clangs, the steam-pipes belch, the slow, rhythmic, muffled snores of the smoke-stacks give place to quick, violent gasps and snorts. When the obstruction is passed the slow, smooth order prevails again.

Having got over the sand-bar Dillingham swung on with his usual pacific deliberateness. He and Bashford and Jerry were sitting in Bashford's room in the newspaper office, and Dillingham was talking of *The New Era*, a subject always strewn with sand-bars for him.

"How the deuce have you managed to keep that vagabond newspaper of yours alive for three years ?" Bashford asked, with neighborly curiosity.

Dillingham turned a hard, steady eye upon him,

his face set. "I've kept *The New Era* alive, by Godfrey," he said, over a protruding nether lip, "because she had to be kept alive. I've kept her alive because I've let her eat before I ate myself." He leaned back in his chair and pulled his slouch hat over his Websterian brow. "I'll tell you right now, gentlemen," he said, falling into a manner which was a reminiscence of his term in the Kansas legislature, "*The New Era* is the only paper in the world that lives for a principle—the only paper on earth with a soul in it; and that's the reason she can't die." He shut his lips tightly over his pipe-stem. Then a bubble of laughter exploded in him, and found vent through the pipe, which sent up a little Vesuvian shower of ashes and sparks. "All the same," he added, his eyes twinkling, "I wish I knew where to find the \$17 for next week's patent insides." He brushed the ashes from his coat and became serious. "No, sir," he said; "I've kept her alive for three years; but the outlook's pretty dubious now."

"That's too bad," said Bashford. "Maybe your price is too high. One-fifty per annum, cash in advance, is a good deal to pay for applied Christianity these times."

"The subscribers are all right—what there are of 'em," said the editor; "it's the advertisements. Things work out in a mighty curious way. Now take *The New Era*: God made a little, old, fat, bald-headed German brewer, named Billy Schlecht, just so's this newspaper could have a show." He took a copy of the paper from his pocket and spread it out

on his knee, and looked thoughtfully at the conspicuous advertisement of the Schlecht Brewing Company. "Made Billy Schlecht," he repeated, musingly, "and gave him a one-horse brewery out on Blue Island Avenue, so's to keep this paper with a soul in it agoing. I've had other advertisements now and then, but most of 'em came with the patent insides, so I didn't get much out of 'em. If I hadn't got hold of Billy Schlecht and got him interested, and if he hadn't stood by me with that ad. through thick and thin—cash on the 10th of every month—I guess—I guess it 'd a gone pretty hard with *The New Era*. She'd been alive, but I guess she wouldn't been alive in the flesh."

"Is Billy backsliding?" Jerry asked.

"No," said Dillingham, "Billy's just as stanch in the faith as ever he was. But, you see, the brewers are going into a trust—a combination. If Billy stays outside, they'll bust him sure; and if he goes in, of course that'll take the management out of his hands and I can't count on that ad. any more." Dillingham sat staring at the cut of the Schlecht Brewery, which was merely a black daub on the paper because of poor presswork.

"See here, Dillingham," said Bashford, gravely; "if Schlecht goes into the trust I'll get you another advertiser." Then he added, quickly, lest any one should suppose he really cared, "We can't let *The New Era's* light be snuffed out by a little thing like the lack of a brewery."

Dillingham looked around at him a little shyly. "That 'd be very good of you," he said, awkwardly;

"of course I'll pay you the usual commission," he added, twinkling.

"I ought to have a half interest, at least," said Bashford.

"Say," said Dillingham, seriously, "why don't you fellows come into this thing with me—come into *The New Era*. We'd make it a howling success!"

"You couldn't afford to take us in," said Bashford; "our combined wages wouldn't be enough of an object to you, and that's all we have to lose."

"I tell you this paper can be made to pay," Dillingham replied, earnestly. "You fellows come into it—blast it! we could interest capital if we had anybody here whose clothes fitted 'em; we could get backing. There's a fortune for you fellows; a career for you."

He stood up, his eyes shining with enthusiasm under his bald brow.

"Where would you come in?" Jerry asked, smiling.

"Oh, I'd come in anywhere," said Dillingham, impatiently; "think the thing over."

When he had gone Jerry swung around to the window. "Good old Dillingham," he said, affectionately; and after thinking a moment he added, casually, "there might be something in it."

Bashford was staring down at the carpet. "I wouldn't mind putting in my time and talents and capital, and taking a third interest in his enthusiasm," he muttered.

"Can't you get plenty on your own account?" Jerry asked.

"I don't seem to," Bashford replied, pulling himself together with an effort. "I seem to be losing the ability to believe in things; seem to be sort of fading out like a photograph set in the sun; be sort of all running together in a mere featureless, indistinguishable lump." He got up and stood at the window looking far off over the lake. "I wouldn't be surprised any time to find that my nose had melted away, my eyes filled up. You know how the gingerbread men your mother made looked after they were baked. Well, I'm getting that way. I think I'll have some pictures taken so I can recall how I used to look when I had a diversified face."

Jerry seized the opportunity for which he had been waiting. "I saw a photograph of you—a very good one—the other day," he said.

Bashford glanced around in mild surprise. "Of me?"

"Yes," said Jerry; "at Mrs. Hess's."

"Oh yes," said Bashford, coolly, as though it were of no consequence. He turned back to the window.

Jerry could not remember that he had ever spoken to Bashford about the Hesses. He surmised, therefore, that Mabel had told Bashford about knowing him.

"I was altogether mistaken in that girl Mabel," Jerry went on, doggedly, but carefully looking into the corner so that he would not meet his friend's eye. "I boarded there four, five months, and I

thought she was just a rattle-headed, rather flip sort of girl. I find she's a lot more than that."

"Yes," said Bashford, "she's a lot more than that."

"It's a shame that she's stuck down in that miserable boarding-house," Jerry ventured.

"Yes," said Bashford, "it's a shame."

"She wouldn't be either, if—" Jerry stopped abruptly; after a moment he said, "Odd, isn't it, how a girl that seems to have no moral perceptions particularly, who has nothing high or sustaining about her mentally, will still stick to certain ideals through trials that would make all but one man out of a hundred throw over his ideals ten times over?"

Bashford turned around now; something imperious in his glance caught Jerry's eye. "Do you know why that girl left the store?" he demanded.

"No."

"Well—" Bashford stopped a moment and drew his lips together. "She needn't have gone into the boarding-house kitchen; her mother and the little boy needn't have suffered from lack of money, either—which was a hundred times more to her than her own disappointment."

"I thought, from what her mother said, that she was discharged at the store for staying away when they were sick," said Jerry.

"Yes," said Bashford, "her mother thinks that." He turned back to the window and added, in an ordinary, conversational tone, "That girl's Joan of Arc; and there are five or ten thousand like her in

this city, working in shops and offices and factories—that is to say, walking through hell, which is where the men are every day. I've been an ass all my life," said Bashford, after a long silence, during which Jerry's thoughts had drifted out to sea, so that he had to recall the especial cause of his friend's confession. "I got married when I had no sense at all," Bashford continued; "I came away to repent and reform, but I have done neither. I'm just as eager now to make a fool of myself as ever I was."

Jerry judged that any interruption on his part would be superfluous, and after a moment Bashford went on: "I reckon the trouble with me is that I'm a sinker; I can't get up at the top of things and look out over them. I'm down at the bottom, and I keep seeing this thing and that thing, and wishing I had it. Mostly I don't get it; but if I do, I find it isn't what I thought it was. I'm a coward! I know what I want; but I'm afraid to go after it—afraid somebody might say boo! at me; then I'd cry." He wheeled around, laughing. "Come, now, tell me something disgraceful about yourself; patch up my self-respect."

But it was four o'clock, and Jerry hastened away. He was beating slowly up Adams Street in the face of a boisterous lake wind, one eye, full of dust, fixed on the steps of the government building. A little old man came down, holding to his hat and peering up the windy street. It was Melvin, the clerk. Jerry tossed his self-respect in with the other litter which the wind bore, and plunged across

the street. Fortunately, Melvin's near-sightedness enabled Jerry to make the meeting seem quite casual.

The clerk greeted him effusively. They withdrew to the shelter of the storm-doors, and the old man talked endlessly—of what, Jerry only half knew. A question about Georgia House kept coming up in his throat, but he could not get it out. Finally, at the end of a long story about nothing, Melvin took hold of Jerry's lapel. The clerk's little old face wrinkled in a hundred minute seams; a superannuated wink came back to his deep-set, dim eye. He stretched up to reach Jerry's ear. Jerry inclined his head.

"Say," the clerk whispered hoarsely, with a bad breath, "you know Miss House don't come to the office any more." He dropped down to a level foot and gave Jerry's vest a tap with his knuckles.

"No?" said Jerry, as innocently as possible.

The old man came up on tiptoe again. "Hasn't been there since the day you were up, four weeks ago. The judge, you know, the father—" He came down to his heels and tapped Jerry's vest again, and winked. "Strict notions, you know; society—high-flown ideas—strict." He kept winking and nodding as he said it.

"Oh," said Jerry, smiling a little in spite of himself. He wondered if it would be safe to offer the old man a drink. He would have enjoyed devoting the whole dollar and a-half in his pocket to Mr. Melvin's entertainment.

But while Jerry was still in doubt the clerk

straightened back and assumed his official air. "Fine young lady," he said, severely—"very fine young lady."

Jerry bade him good-bye and walked away unreasoningly happy. He kept breaking out in grins so that people on the street smiled at him. He told himself that, of course, he had only old Melvin's guess for it, and he told himself that it was absurd of old Melvin to guess at a relation between the disclosure of his desire to meet the girl and her father's decision to remove her from the office. He said that he was a conceited ass to suppose that Judge House instinctively recognized in him a menace to his daughter. But he kept on grinning, and the conductor had to punch him on the shoulder as the car was going through the tunnel to remind him to pay over the nickel he held in his hand.

IX

EVERY day for a month, at a quarter after four, Jerry had walked by the post-office. Now that there was no longer any reason for going he went just the same, partly that the walk was a kind of tender reminiscence, partly that the veritable building, the ugly, gabled old pile there really and palpably before him, helped to give a verity and distinctness to the dreams that were always whirling in his head. When he had walked by, his heart thumping against his ribs, hoping each instant to see her come down those steps, he had never dared stop. Now that there was no chance of seeing her he frequently paused for ten minutes and stared over at the grimy governmental façade.

But the virtue of the walk past the post-office soon wore out. Then he began paying more attention to the quiet corner of Heine Street and Dearborn Avenue, at the risk of bringing down the suspicion of the neighbors, to say nothing of the police.

The judge's house was an old-fashioned, narrow, bay-windowed brown-stone dwelling, wedged in a whole tight row of others very like it. A flight of brown-stone steps with nickel-plated railings, somewhat tarnished, led up from the flagging to the rather forbidding front door with stained glass

panels. Once, standing across the street, Jerry caught a glimpse of the girl through the bay-window of the first floor. He stood and watched, careless of the servant-girl who was scrubbing the steps on his side the street and watching him. When Georgia stepped out of sight, which may have been after an interval of ten seconds, Jerry resumed breathing and walked on. Another time he went down her side of the street, and nearly ran into her and the judge as they came out. He hastily looked away and hurried on.

He was thinking of these things rather bitterly, one afternoon in June, as he hung to a strap in a Clark Street cable-car. The car had just come out of the tunnel, and made the turn which sent Jerry and the dozen other standing passengers lurching bonelessly to this side, then to that. Nothing but Georgia House was in his mind. He looked down, and there, within reach of his hand, sat Georgia, looking up at him and smiling. Jerry promptly elbowed the next man out of the way and got in front of her.

"You've resigned from the court-house," he said, bending over and speaking loudly because of the noise of the car.

"Yes," she said, "papa decided the work wasn't good for me. It really was good for me; but when he decided it wasn't, what could I do?"

"Of course you could have stayed, for one thing," Jerry suggested.

"Yes, I suppose I could," she replied, smiling mischievously; "but it wasn't worth that, when

there are so many important things—such as hats and matinée tickets to fight for.”

The conversation proceeded jerkily under many disadvantages. When the car stopped they could not talk, for then every one could hear them, which embarrassed Jerry into silence. And it was only now and then, anyway, that his eyes would give his tongue a chance. Georgia wore a waist with very fine stripes of white and pale pink in it, and a dark-blue skirt, and a belt with a silver buckle, and a wide white hat, rolled up on one side, with red flowers in it. That much of her dress he noticed, and the toe of her slender shoe. The rest of his attention was so absorbed with watching her grayish eyes glance up at him and down ; in seeing how small and straight her nose was, how short and red her lips, how white and even her teeth, how clear and wholesome the colorless oval of her cheek. He kept wondering, too, at the miracle by which he, Jerry Drew, was standing there talking to her and committing cannibalisms with his eyes. He remembered that the first time he had spoken to her—which was the time but one before this—he had not thought her strikingly pretty, but had been taken by the frankness of her manner, the sweetness, daintiness, grace of her appearance. He now saw plainly that all of these things were subordinate to her beauty, which was quite unique and overpowering.

As they approached Heine Street an emotion kept strengthening and rising in him. He thought he would leave the car with her, walk along the street with her—and then—

They were almost at the corner. Still she did not signal the conductor, nor ask him to. She was telling about Melvin, laughing, and her words rang emptily in Jerry's buzzing ears. All his senses were merged and lost in the delicious, painful expectancy, as with one who keeps a tryst and hears a light footfall coming, and thinks, but half doubts, it is she for whom he waits. He was instinctively aware that the man beside him, whom he had elbowed aside, was signalling the conductor.

Georgia looked up at this man surprised. "Is this our corner?" she asked.

The man nodded. The car slowed. Georgia got up and put her hand on the man's arm to steady herself as she said to Jerry, while the car was coming to a stop, "He's ever so nice and useful when he's corked; but if he starts talking, you're lost." And Jerry stared a minute, until he remembered Melvin, whom the events of the last half-minute had pushed miles away from his consciousness. He smiled galvanically, and looked once at the man beside her. He saw a youngish man, prematurely old, or with that effect—somewhere around thirty Jerry guessed him to be. He was tall, slender, clothed in a brown suit, offensively new and well-fitting. He had a smooth-shaven face, curiously lined, and a high, narrow forehead. The face and the man's air had an effect of predicating something of him—something vaguely supposed to be associated with the knowledge of a great-grandfather, of wines and salads. For an instant the two men looked into each other's eyes, and

each knew the other was taking stock of him. Then the man in the brown clothes went to the door, followed by the girl. At the door she glanced back at Jerry, and nodded in a friendly way. As her companion lifted his hat Jerry noticed, with some pleasure, that his hair was getting thin.

"Don't you think he's nice-looking?" said Georgia, cheerfully, as she and the man stepped up to the sidewalk.

"Is that why you didn't introduce me," said the man—"because you wished to spare me the invidious comparison?"

"No," said the girl, with apparent frankness; "I don't know his name." She laughed, also very frankly.

The man looked down at her in some surprise. "Did you just take up with him on the general fact of his good looks?" he asked.

"Oh no," said Georgia; "he's a reporter"—as though that explained everything.

"I ought to have guessed that," said the man, "from the calm way he elbowed me out of my place."

"He didn't know you were with me," said Georgia, to whom it was evidently a joke; "he took you for a rank outsider. Didn't you see how surprised he was at last?"

"No," said the man, slowly; "of course he couldn't have guessed that I wasn't a rank outsider from anything you did. You concealed the fact of your acquaintance with me with great tact."

The girl looked up at him accusingly from under

her dark, arched eyebrows. "Now you're getting sarcastic!" she cried.

The man laughed. "I congratulate you," he said; "you'll know hyperbole and epigram next. Sarcasm is really the easiest to recognize—"

Georgia started up the brown-stone steps a little ahead of him. "Don't be absurd," she said. The man knew that he had somehow offended her, and was to be cast out temporarily for it. He followed meekly.

Meantime Jerry, having ridden three blocks beyond his corner, was walking home, thinking bad things of the man in the brown clothes.

X

JERRY was at some pains wondering who this brown-clothed man might be. Through the merest accident the society editor enlightened him.

The society editor was the only stellar body in *The Evening Call* system. All the others were merely satellites, moving—somewhat spasmodically—about Brinsley. The society editor had an effect of keeping her independence, which the others could never sufficiently admire. No one but Brinsley knew her real name. The others knew only her pen-name, and addressed her by it when she gave them opportunity, which was seldom. They knew that she was married and lived on the south side, and had been born in the purple, or adopted into it, for she went to some of the teas and receptions she wrote about, which made her unique among society editors. So much the reporters were given to understand. With these premises, and their further knowledge that she worked for a weekly wage, they understood on their own accounts that either the family fortune or the husband had gone wrong. She was a slender young woman, with a thin, dark, nervous, comely face, and a neat Boston accent that she insisted upon among the strong, rolling Western r's which otherwise prevailed in the office. Bash-

ford said that he always felt distinctly politer for half an hour after she nodded to him in the hall. Jerry had once openly pitied her—in her absence, of course—and had been marvelled at as a daring iconoclast. He was equal to dragging her down to the common level, and sympathizing with her supposititious misfortunes, if she were not in sight. But when he bolted into Brinsley's office one afternoon and saw her sitting at the desk, he became conscious of his shirt-sleeves, and burningly so of the short, disreputable brier pipe in one hand.

The society editor glanced up from the illustrated paper she had picked up, and smiled at him in a way which permitted him to come on in. Jerry managed to say, "Oh, Mr. Brinsley not in?" and to get his thumb over the bowl of the pipe, and to slide the whole machine into his trousers-pocket in a way he considered quite deft, although the smoke kept curling up out of his pocket and around his wrist annoyingly. He could not remember having known of tobacco smelling so vilely, either. It almost strangled him.

"Mr. Brinsley will be in very soon," said the society editor, still smiling. "That was a lovely little editorial on bloomers you had last night," she added, incidentally, in her cool, precise way—and the way made it seem much more important to Jerry.

When Brinsley said, also incidentally, of something he had written, "That's all tommy-rot, Drew," and tossed it into the waste-basket, Jerry felt perfectly at ease. Now he was painfully uncomfortable, and he almost blushed.

"I was credited with writing it, in fact," said the society editor, laughing a little—"so you see how good it was."

"Do you ever write?" said Jerry. "Your things read so easy that I can't imagine them as having been whittled out with a pen. I rather thought you talked them straight into type some way over a pink teacup."

He paused and caught his breath, fearing he had made a wild shot; but Ethel Esterly smiled very pleasantly, and from that time on he and the society editor were very good friends.

Of course he found occasion in due time to say something about the Houses—bringing in the subject with the graceful naïveté of a dog slinking with a stolen bone.

"Did you know that pretty Miss House of yours was going to be married?" said the society editor, pausing at the open door to Jerry's den one morning a week after the street-car episode.

"No," said Jerry, with what he tried afterwards to assure himself was an air of polite interest. "Of course I don't know them at all—except the judge, professionally," he added, as soon as he could.

"It isn't announced yet—the engagement," said Ethel Esterly; "but I am told it soon will be."

"And who's the lucky man?" said Jerry, smiling like cold tallow.

"A sort of relative of the family—Mr. Sidney Bane. He's been abroad five years—a very bright man—but—"

"But what?" Jerry insisted, trying to make it appear a joke; I'm interested, you know."

"But one who seems rather to have missed it, you know—who seems not quite suited to a girl that very decidedly hasn't missed it."

"But if she misses it by marrying him, won't that make it all right?" Jerry suggested, wondering at himself that he could make light of it.

"Perhaps," said Miss Esterly, who seemed quite serious about it. "But if you knew her as well as I do you wouldn't wish her to become eligible that way."

"You know her, then?" Jerry dropped back in his chair, wondering guiltily whether he had shouted it so very loud. He guessed, with a sinking of the heart that he had, for the society editor looked at him with an odd little smile a moment, and said, "Oh, quite well," in her ordinary cool way, and went away.

Jerry passed a week in despair. Then, walking in the park one afternoon, a voice that stirred him through and through sang in his ears, "Why don't you ride?"

A wheel, a skirt, a laughing face under a jaunty cap, came by him. In a moment he was walking beside Georgia House, looking greedily into her face and forgetting that unhappiness could be in the world.

Ten minutes later he burst into the nearest bicycle shop. Then he cooled down and spent five agonized minutes persuading the proprietor to rent him a wheel—he being without the sum invariably

required as a deposit to guarantee the return of the wheel, as per conspicuous placard on the wall. The man yielded, finally, thereby saving himself from assault, and Jerry from the first step in a career of crime. Then Jerry was wheeling furiously towards the Grant monument.

What they said didn't matter. It was what they did not say that mattered. Jerry looked at her—this white girl wheeling beside him, whom he had seen only four times, of whom he knew almost nothing, except what his eyes told him, and he laughed in his heart at the society editor's story about Sidney Bane.

Jerry stuck manfully to her side until they got in front of the respectable brown-stone house on Dearborn Avenue. Then he plunged into a great and fateful enterprise he had been daringly revolving in his mind.

"Will you ride with me to-morrow afternoon?" he asked.

The girl seemed neither surprised nor offended.

"Not to-morrow," she said, as she pulled her machine over the gutter.

"Day after, then," said Jerry, desperately.

She laughed at him mischievously. "Maybe day after," she said, gayly.

The casual observer might have thought the ride of Thursday exactly like the ride of Tuesday, except that they sat on a bench in the park and rested for fifteen minutes; but to Jerry it was entirely different—absolutely new. He managed to let her know his name in a way he had carefully thought out, by

telling her what the elevator boy always said to him in the morning. He had debated telling her about the society editor ; but not knowing the society editor's name was a drawback in attempting to identify her to Georgia. He imagined a scene in which Georgia and the society editor and himself met, all being acquainted, but Georgia not knowing his name, and he not knowing the society editor's name. He thought of writing a little special article about such a fancied meeting for one of the Sunday papers, but decided not to, as it seemed like a profanation. He would not have minded profaning the society editor either.

He saw that he ought to get his acquaintance with Georgia on a better footing. Besides haunting the street-cars and the park, he devised a great number of complicated pretexts for calling at the house—and rejected all of them. He thought of writing her a note asking leave to call. But it seemed to him that if he put it in a conventional way like that she would try it by conventional tests—which, manifestly, it could not stand. While he cared nothing about the brown-stone house, or the judge, or Mr. Sidney Bane, or that vague, forbidding thing—her social position—still there was a subtle essence of all these together which somewhat daunted him when he was away from her. He had never known a girl placed as she was. He had never penetrated further than the hall behind a brown-stone-front, and her life was mysterious to him, beyond the life of a girl in the walks of life he knew about. He had uneasy imaginings of goings on behind the brown-stone

front—of those things which were written up in the society columns, and which he could realize only in an indistinct way. When she was before him, and he was looking at her white cheeks and grayish eyes, she was a girl and he was a man, and he had no difficulty in taking his place at her side. But when he was away from her something that baffled and half daunted him, because he could not exactly comprehend it, enveloped her and forbade him. Moreover, Mr. Sidney Bane was in and of this imperfectly known, baffling something. In a rather helpless way Jerry fell back on the society editor; and just as he did that in his mind the society editor took sick and stayed away from the office. Then he saw, in the society column, an item like this:

“Judge and Miss House have gone to Broad Lake, Wisconsin, for the summer. Mr. Sidney Bane accompanies them.”

Jerry surmised that there was no Mrs. House, then, and he sympathized with Georgia on that account as well as he could for his own misery. He went about for a week with a vast, aching emptiness in him—abysmal, cavernous, as though it had swallowed all of him but the shell. Then Bashford took him to a masquerade of dubious propriety, and after that he managed to get through the summer in an empty kind of fashion by thinking of Georgia all the time, and doing what else was necessary from a thin, brittle, surface consciousness.

XI

THE lake curled up, muddy and cold-looking, under a bitter October wind. It tumbled, vast, restless, endless, beyond the breakwater, dirty gray and white-seamed, with a look of iciness and cruelty that made one anxious for the big freighter steaming laboriously into the harbor. Inside the breakwater twoscore craft, big and little, sail and steam, rode uneasily at anchor. The little schooner leaped and tossed helplessly in the waves. The big steamer rocked and swayed with a sort of scared dignity. Jerry, in the upper story of the art institute, in front of a broad window, found them better to look at than the pictures at his back. He made a little prayer that she was not coming home by the lake, and turned back into the galleries to go out.

Half-way through he paused a moment to glance at the portrait of a girl. Then he saw, not far from him, standing sidewise to him, a tall, ulstered man, and beside the man a woman's pretty form in a dark, close-fitting dress that had been made for it; saw a winged, absurd little bonnet on a nest of black hair; a fair cheek; a profile, all at once—and in the same at-once everything else ceased. He stood staring at her long enough for his consciousness to take that deep dive and come up

again, so that he noted her gloves and the tip of her shoe distinctly. In an instant she glanced around, and, without the slightest hesitation, came over to him, holding out her hand, not smiling, but looking up at him so frankly and kindly that he got one of the most profound convictions of his life on the spot. The conviction was that he had begun loving her only that moment, and that all before was only make-believe.

She said something about being away and coming back and how was he that rang vague and empty in his ears, and to which he mumbled some empty reply.

"Can't I see you sometimes?" he said, abruptly, a puckering around the corners of his eyes showing the stress he felt.

She looked up at him seriously and hesitated a moment. Then bending very slightly towards him, she said in the same grave way, "Come up to-morrow evening." She smiled slightly and nodded her head and went back to Mr. Sidney Bane, who had never ceased examining a haystack with a purple top beyond which the sun was setting.

When Jerry called, Georgia herself let him in. She revealed herself anew to him. He found Georgia at home subtly and charmingly different, as though she managed to subdue the whole house to a background which gave her figure greater distinction as well as greater distinctness. It was, so far as Jerry was able to sense it, a rather solemnly comfortable house. He stepped into a small, high hall, dimly lit. The staircase was at the right, and

the heavy, carved mahogany balustrade had an effect of rising ponderously from the funereal newel. To the left a white bearskin rug lay on the polished floor before double doors with portières over them.

Georgia took him to a room opening from the lower end of the hall—from which to this room was as from Elizabethan ruffs to flannel tennis suits. A tall lamp with a red shade stood at one end of the mantel. The gas-log, flickering in its imitation cheerfulness, gave a theatrical suggestion which, inscrutably, only strengthened the impression of snug security from all outside—perhaps even from the solemnity of the hall.

Jerry sank down in the big chair which Georgia showed him with a little sigh of content, reflecting that the forbidding brown-stone front was at last in the rear of him. He had carefully thought out some conversation beginning where they left off at the art institute; but Georgia did not begin there at all. Instead of being grave, she was merrier than he had ever known her. She described the rough lake voyage very comically. Without mimicking, she had the knack of presenting a capital caricature. She aroused Jerry's emulation. He told of the masquerade, and remembered and invented other funny things to tell of. In a little while they got back to the inexhaustible mine of their school-days. Georgia had been to a boarding-school, but Jerry had the district school at Tampico, and easily held his own with her. They laughed continually, and each of them dimly real-

ized that they were merely trying to laugh themselves out of court. Every moment, while Jerry was talking or listening or laughing from the surface, a restless under-consciousness was running out to her. Among the things in his giddy head was an odd idea that if, as she was laughing and telling that story, she should suddenly fall over into his arms and have her laugh out there, it would be quite natural and matter of course. In the pauses of the talk their two selves swept down upon them embarrassingly. If he glanced 'up then and met her eyes, both looked away quickly.

Jerry was aware now and then that he had been carried far from the ground he wished for—the ground that acknowledged something between them, the ground of that rare moment in the art institute. But he was bound to confess to himself, when he arose to go, that he had never spent so pleasant an evening.

Georgia walked into the hall with him. They went through the portières side by side, which brought them very close together. Turning, his arm brushed against her shoulder, and the courses of speech suddenly closed in him. They went up the hall and stopped on the bearskin rug.

“Well—I’m awf’ly glad you’re back,” said Jerry, aware that the words were idle and foolish. A warm, delicious air enveloped him. Saying idle and foolish words was the last thing he cared about. The girl looked down silently, and, with the tip of her shoe, began softly stirring the hair of the rug.

"Because I can't very well get along when you're away," said Jerry, idly and foolishly.

Georgia went on stirring the hair of the rug. Suddenly, without her moving, she became nearer to him. Without premeditation, without his meaning to do it, by simply melting helplessly into the act, his hand touched her waist. He bent down. She neither assented nor opposed, did not look up or change her attitude by a hair's-breadth in any way. He kissed her.

At the same instant, as it seemed to Jerry afterwards, a key grated harshly in the lock, shot home true, and, all together, the bolt clicked and the door swung open. Jerry and Georgia had scarcely time to compose themselves from the swift motion of stepping apart when Judge House strode in.

The judge saw before him his daughter, not looking at him, and a sturdy young man who was not only looking but gaping at him.

The judge's hand was upon the handle of the door. He flung it back against the wall, wide open. For an instant his glance and the glance of the young man clung together. Then the judge's eye turned towards the open door and the darkness beyond. He bent his head in a slight, a very slight, but distinct motion in the same exterior direction.

Jerry's lips moved mechanically, muttering something like good-night. His legs moved mechanically, like those of an automaton whose string has been pulled. He stepped out. The door closed sharply behind him. On the steps the harsh wind blew in his face and reminded him to put on his hat

and overcoat. By the time he had walked a couple of blocks he began to realize that he had figuratively been kicked out. He kept thinking of it and grinning as he hurried on mechanically, for it seemed not at all offensive. A couple of blocks farther, and the tremendous fact which had immediately preceded the kicking out, and before which his consciousness had been lying dazed, began coming to him, pouring and rushing in upon him. He grew up and dilated with it, marvelled over it in instants of breathless, half-incredulous suspense. Glancing up, he realized that the stars were good fellows; that the night was his friend. It came to him that he had not been to church for a long time, and he was sorry over it. Not that he supposed going to church would make any difference, only it seemed to him that nothing else would be so appropriate to that illimitable, loving, humble brotherhood with all things which he then felt as to stand up in the little church at Tampico while the choir sang the opening hymn, and good old Brother Dewstoe fumbled near-sightedly over his notes behind the little pulpit. He recalled distinctly the sense of it—of the high, solemn atmosphere of worship.

By this time Judge House was seated in the arm-chair which Jerry had vacated, and Georgia was standing by the piano, pretending to arrange her music. She was regretting that she had not gone directly up-stairs to her own room. The judge was regretting it also, as he would have regretted anything that threatened to interfere with stretching his legs before the grate and smoking the last,

precious cigar. He had closed the door behind Jerry, given his daughter a sharp glance, laid off his hat and coat, and started for the library. Georgia had preceded him so far as the sitting-room. Seeing her there, he yielded, in a rather aggrieved, irritated frame of mind, to a struggling sense of paternal duty, and sat down in the arm-chair.

The incident was exceedingly annoying to him, and the one thing he really demanded of his daughter was that she should not annoy him. Ever since her mother died a dozen years before he had lived under an uneasy sense of the potentialities for annoyance possessed by a handsome daughter. He wished her to be handsome, but he had often regretted that she was not handsome in a less striking way. He wished her to be popular, but sometimes seeing her with a crowd of young fellows around her it occurred to him that she carried it too far. He was fond of her and proud of her in a placid, self-bounded sort of way. In most things he had been indulgent to the point of non-responsibility, not especially on account of confidence in her, but because he recognized a clash with her as a thing that would bother him immensely.

Georgia honestly believed that she had the best of fathers. She loved his handsome, dignified presence, his reputation and distinction. She thought him very kind to her because he gave her money liberally, and very often took her with him. She knew well enough why he had decided that it was not fitting for her to sit in his chamber an hour or two a day and play at being his type-writist. He

half suspected that she knew. But there were no confidences or confessions between them on the subject. Georgia had yielded the point graciously as the wise woman yields to the foolish little idiosyncrasies of her men—lets them smoke a pipe if they insist upon it, and falls in with their harmless, transparent little fables about the committee-meeting or the lodge. It did not occur to her as strange that there were no confidences between them on this and other topics. She had grown up under the free rein he lazily gave, filling in her own life, and taking command of it out of the inborn womanly capability and self-reliance in her until, insensibly to her, they stood on a level footing—the father living his life, the daughter living hers. The process and its effects had been much more apparent to the judge. He had thought a good many times, often with real contrition, of giving more care to the girl. But he shrank from the sense of how many irritating things that could involve, things inimical to his ease, his pleasure, to the pursuits which he followed with a sort of indolent persistence. So he had put off being a father to her. Now that he was brought up suddenly face to face with a climax he was vexed that a parental responsibility had been thrust upon him. He wished to have his beloved smoke and drink and get to bed.

“Who was the young man?” he asked, as though it were incidental.

“Mr. Drew.”

“A reporter?”

“Yes.”

"I don't like him to come here."

"No?"

"No."

There was a pause. Georgia had gone into the room ready to make a confession—only a half-truthful one, to be sure; but a confession. She felt guilty and ashamed, and if her father had given her the right chance she would have told of her several meetings with Jerry, of the accidental encounter in the art institute, and of his sudden appeal there to which she had yielded. She was prepared to tell this and to defend her course, even to the length of becoming indignant if her father should try to make anything compromising out of it. She would have acknowledged the kiss if he had directly charged her with it; but she felt that it would be unfair to charge her with it, because it was so purely an accident. But she resented her father's attitude; his appearance of pursuing her as in a cross-examination.

"Did you invite him here?" asked the judge.

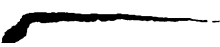
"Yes."

"You knew that would not please me."

"No." She was angry now.

The judge felt himself striking into the air. He felt the matter becoming more difficult. That irritated him; but he waited a moment. He knew comparatively little of his daughter; but he did know one or two things. He now bethought him of them and took a new direction.

"Well," he said, slowly, and in a sorrowful voice; "I've really tried, my girl, to get good friends and



associates for you ; and I've tried to give you advantages and opportunities so that you could have the best to select from. Since we've been left alone—" He stopped abruptly.

His voice had not ceased before the girl was standing beside his chair. "You've done a great deal for me, papa," she said, earnestly, "and I wish to do everything to please you. I met Mr. Drew day before yesterday by chance and he asked if he could call. There's really no reason why he shouldn't, is there?"

He recognized the futility of going into that argument with her ; so he only said, smiling up at her, "You don't really care about this reporter?"

"He's quite as bright and agreeable as the young men you'd have me know," she said, evasively.

"Yes," said the judge, "you care for him as a bright, agreeable young man. But I hope you care for me differently. Don't ask him here, for my sake."

The girl knew well enough that he had put her in a trap, although she was not quite able to see how he had done it. With the resentment of being trapped, she answered, indifferently. "Very well, if you wish it."

Then the judge got an uneasy, instinctive sense that he could scarcely afford to take his point in that way.

"Don't do it merely as a sacrifice to my caprice," he said. "I wish not to be unreasonable with you in anything. I hope I'll never have to answer for the crime of making you less happy than you might

have been. In things of this kind I suppose—I suppose I'm helpless enough."

"I'll do as you wish, papa," said the girl, gently.

"Not merely as I wish," said the judge. He relied upon her feminine inability to follow the argument. "You mustn't feel that you're being coerced by a selfish, interfering old father—" He broke off in a very abrupt little laugh and dropped his head against the back of the chair. He exerted his will. It operated in a way he did not know, and a tear stood in his eye.

Instantly the girl dropped on her knees beside the chair. She put both her hands over his and leaned her head against his shoulder.

"I'll never ask him here again, papa," she said.

The judge put his free hand on her shining hair. After a moment he said, "That's a good girl." She kissed him and went up to bed, quite light-hearted, although she could not have told why, for she really liked Jerry and wished to see him.

Judge House did not move towards the library whither his wishes had been impatiently tending. Something held him fast. By gradual, imperceptible relaxations of the muscles, he sagged down in his chair, his head lopping forward. The attitude was most unbecoming. It thrust his paunch into lymphatic protuberance; his legs seemed smaller in proportion; his stiff, shining collar shoved up a roll of fat on each cheek; his double chin rolled out conspicuously. Delicate, vinous red marks, like the dim fibre in worn bank-notes, were visible over his cheek-bones. His eyes stared dully at the

flickering gas-log. His honor was undergoing a bad quarter of an hour. He knew that he had practised a shabby little trick on Georgia; that the tear in his eye and the pathos in his voice were turned on—bits of acting. He knew they were of a piece with the fine sentiments he uttered in political speeches, at notable club dinners, sometimes—under duress, as it were, from the bench. He saw himself a charlatan. There were things in his life that he seldom reverted to. They came up before him now. He had wished to become rich, to win a secure, distinguished position, and to take his elegant leisure in it. He had succeeded—and now, for a moment, he realized dimly at what cost. There had been two or three dark plunges taken swiftly with shut eyes and clenched teeth, and resolutely put out of mind afterwards. These were in his mind more or less at many times; but they did not hurt him. He half justified, half defied them, and glossed them out of their proper identity with euphuisms. To-night he looked at them steadily. He did not flinch from the facts even when he put them in the forbidding verbal garb of certain inhibitory statutes which he sometimes paused to glance at in the book with curious interest. He did not even wince at them. Those plunges had also been leaps forward to the goal he desired. He accepted them as such. The goal was pleasant. He contented himself with that. It was not that his conscience troubled him, therefore, that the quarter of an hour was bad. It was because, for those acrid moments, he saw himself a cheap,

bought little fellow playing a dirty game for a poor prize.

That young man at the door with the inspiration of youth in his troubled face came back to him and recalled his own youth; his own big, high aspirations long before luxurious ease in a secure position became his goal. He realized indistinctly that he had lacked steadfastness and that patience which is a great clearness of spirit shedding out over things and revealing them truly, enabling one to choose and to wait; that he had been too eager, too greedy, to win greatly.

XII

GEORGIA felt guilty towards her father. She was very clear in her determination not to see Jerry again. The kiss troubled her a good deal; it was so compromising. Without that the situation would have been so simply, so absolutely in her own hands. She had not, in the least, meant to let him kiss her. When she felt, in a thrill through her body, that he was about to she was going to forbid him, to prevent him; but somehow for an instant her nerves turned to water; a subtle, a fatal impediment interposed between her will and her act. For an instant she hung in a helpless abeyance—and then it was too late. She was ashamed of it; and again, down in her heart she defied her shame, for she liked Jerry a great deal. Since she was not to see him any more perhaps it did not matter.

Then she realized that perhaps the kiss was not a bad thing, for it compelled her to stop and take stock of her association with Jerry. She had liked him from the very first, and she had gone on with him recklessly but fearlessly, having confidence in herself, and being used to the exercise of full freedom. At the encounter in the art institute, the dumb, doglike appeal in his face touched her profoundly. She had let him come to see her out of

kindness, sympathy partly, and partly out of a sudden tender sense of possession of him; as though she had said, "The man is mine; he gives himself to me; I will be kind to him anyway."

Although she realized something clandestine in the call; something not quite free and open and beyond reproach, she did not ponder it; did not ask herself where it put her. The kiss showed her, and she resolved not to see him again.

She might have kept her resolve if it had not happened that her friend Mrs. Leslie Dayton confessed to being the Ethel Esterly of *The Evening Call*.

The confession seemed to come quite accidentally. Mr. Leslie Dayton was a youngish, smallish, politeish man, with a brown French beard, very nice in his attire. He was privileged to sign himself stockbroker, and he uncomplainingly paid the monthly rent for the little room behind the ground-glass panel which announced that fact, sometimes taking the money for the purpose out of his wife's wages. His connections were very good indeed. He knew most of the moneyed men of the city, who thought him a very agreeable fellow, and gave their commissions to somebody else. Days when the pit was busy Broker Dayton might be seen standing at the edge of the crowd, his hands in the pockets of his neatly creased trousers, looking on with an air of polite interest. But Mr. Leslie Dayton had one immense, saving virtue—he believed in his wife with the faith of a Scotch Presbyterian, not only in her goodness, but in her cleverness. The Daytons, therefore, if not a household, were at least a

camp of harmony. They had married into a transition state and it had stayed with them, with surprising permanence, against all reason, for five years. Mrs. Dayton had the income from \$10,000 at five per cent., and she had her wages as society editor. Mr. Dayton did now and then make and bring home in triumph, as one brings an offering to his gods, a little money. They were waiting to begin living when business picked up and their income was doubled. Meantime they spent the \$2500 they had in concealing the absence of the \$2500 they lacked. They lived in a little flat just around the corner from a swell street. They did light housekeeping there. At times, as Leslie said, it was so light as to be almost impalpable. They pretended to take their meals at the café in the pretentious apartment building next door. Nevertheless, after a dinner of sausage and warmed-over potatoes and tea and crackers, prepared in the sitting-room on the tiny and surreptitious gas-stove and eaten off the innocent-looking sewing table, the Daytons could occasionally lock their economies securely behind them and go out to very fashionable houses where they made two very good figures indeed.

Mr. and Mrs. Dayton frankly and mutually commiserated Mrs. Dayton on their pinched condition, which was tolerable at all only because it was so temporary. At rare intervals Mrs. Dayton had darker moments when she wished other commiseration; moments inducing bursts of confidence, sometimes regretted with cause afterwards.

It was in such a moment that she told Georgia House about being a contributor to the press; although, with a woman's strange instinct for such things, she had Jerry Drew in mind, too. Confidence begets confidence. It is so pleasant to look behind the front rooms of a friend's life. The result was, though it all came about quite incidentally, that, a month after that evening behind the brown-stone front Jerry stood with his finger on the button to Mrs. Dayton's door-bell and his heart in his mouth. A strange, bodiless voice rumbled down through the speaking-tube. The door swung open by that mysterious electrical device which is the joy of the flat-dweller when it works, and Jerry ran upward. At the last turning he glanced down the hall and there stood Georgia waiting for him, smiling. She affected to go back to the beginning again, as though that moment on the bearskin rug had not been, and she kept it up even when they were going down-stairs together—until, almost at the bottom, Jerry stopped her by putting his arm around her and began to do the talking himself. His talk was mostly a lot of small, foolish words without much coherence or sequence. She had nothing at all to say to them, except when he said, for the third time, "Don't you care for me a little?" She said "Yes," having a quite solemn sense that it would be very wicked indeed to falsify at the moment.

Then began a strange time for Jerry; a time without a perspective to it either backward or forward; looking ahead no further than the meeting

of to-morrow and back no further than the meeting of yesterday; a time of the present, full of riotous joys and riotous sorrows, according as she kept or failed to keep the appointment, made in a small perfumed note, perhaps, to meet him at the palm-house in the park at five, or at Field's south door at 3:30; especially according to what Jerry heard or saw of Mr. Sidney Bane, who early became the foil to his love.

After that incident on the stairs there was no more pretence on Georgia's part. A couple of days afterwards Jerry got a note from her, first in a long series, mentioning that she was to be at Mrs. Dayton's next day. Jerry went, too, and both he and Georgia easily guessed at a belated misgiving in Mrs. Dayton's mind. So they availed themselves of the little flat around the corner only at rare intervals. The city was full of other nooks. The park especially afforded abundant opportunities. It was a delirious, killing experience for Jerry—that lurking in the shadow of a statue or by a doorway, his senses straining to catch every light foot-fall, every glimpse of a skirt. If she did not come a monstrous sadness swept down upon him, devoured him. But if she did come!

When he told her that he could not live without her he believed it, with the inexperience of twenty-four. Georgia, with the experience of nineteen, knew better; but she believed it because she liked to. Jerry worked harder than ever; got to be correspondent for two out-of-town papers and put his money religiously in the savings-bank, the circum-

stances of his courtship rendering it phenomenally inexpensive. He showed Georgia the bank-book now and then as a sort of documentary evidence that she must marry him at once, no matter what her father thought. She knew what her father thought. Spring came on, Georgia steadfastly holding up her sense of filial duty against Jerry's mad and maddening importunities.

Then came a formal proposal from Mr. Sidney Bane, promptly, even a little indignantly, rejected ; a killing, intolerable air of dignified reproach against her at home ; more persistent entreaties from Jerry. And then—

Jerry was going down the broad, thronged steps to the train-shed in the Union Station on Canal Street, glancing about with nervous, apprehensive eagerness. Georgia detached herself from the pack of humanity before the long, high iron-fence beyond which the trains were and came to his side silently. They went through the gate, into the car, and sat down together, even Jerry a little fearful and awestruck. There was a gentle pull of the seat under them and the train steamed out, headed for Wisconsin. . . .

There was a country-town hotel at which Jerry, turning back suddenly, caught the clerk grinning at him in a suggestive way. . . . There was an exasperatingly deliberate young man behind a wicket asking mechanically, "Where was she born? What was her mother's maiden name?" Jerry, not knowing, answered as his fancy dictated, and crumpled the license into his coat-pocket with fe-

verish haste. . . . He and Georgia were standing up side by side in a little private parlor at the hotel. Before them stood a dumpy person in clerical garb, his white tie sagging down in a way that exposed the tarnished head of his collar-button, to Jerry's constant and intense annoyance. The clerk stood by, not grinning now, but with air of gallant deference towards Georgia for which Jerry was grateful with a fervency quite out of proportion to the favor. A couple of chambermaids were carrying on a conversation in loud voices in the hall. . . . Then the clerk faded out, somehow. Jerry thrust a bank-note in the clerical person's hand, and replied at random to the congratulations and other platitudes which were offered loquaciously in return. Also, he elbowed the clerical person towards the door and finally out. He and Georgia were alone. . . .

XIII

THE telegram announcing the marriage was handed to Judge House in his chambers before court opened. He glanced at the yellow slip and at the signature, "Georgia," which the operator had written in a flourishing hand; and the combination of letters seemed alien, meaningless, like a queer word in a foreign tongue.

Sidney Bane sat on the big leather lounge, idly tapping the toe of his yellow pointed shoe with his stick. The judge walked over slowly, his hat still in his hand, staring down at the message. Bane glanced at the telegram as the judge handed it, and looked around in sharp surprise, with a little exclamation. The dull, baffled misery in the elder man's face arrested the words which came to the younger's lips, and the judge sat down heavily. For a moment there was silence, Bane waiting, House in mere helpless incredulity. The judge finally reached out and got back the telegram and reread it carefully.

"I suppose it's—genuine," he said, with a glance at Bane that showed he was clutching miserably at the chance.

Bane weighed it a moment and gave a glance at the unwelcome strip of paper. "Yes," he said, slowly, "I think it's genuine."

The judge pulled himself together with a sigh. "Well," he said, doubtfully, "I don't know that there's anything to be done—it's too late—"

He felt a frightful catastrophe suddenly precipitated upon him—a catastrophe which lost none of its abhorrent aspect as his faculties began comprehending it more clearly. He showed what his first consideration was by adding quickly and fervently, "I hope the damned newspapers won't get hold of it."

The first aspect in which the elopement presented itself to him was that of a subtle, incombatale disgrace to himself.

"Poor little girl," Bane murmured.

The judge looked around at him quickly, as though he had said something irrelevant. Then he understood. "Yes, yes," he said, hastily—"poor little girl. I supposed," he added, without any particular purpose in the explanation, "that she was staying with the Wilcoxes." He unfolded the telegram, half furtively, and glanced at it. "Jerry! Of course, it's that reporter—the puppy!"

Suddenly the man came into it, and an angry flush spread over the judge's face. "The miserable puppy!" he exclaimed.

Bane looked steadily down at his shoe, as though he preferred neither to forbid nor encourage.

In a large way the same thought was in the mind of each—that this man had wantonly, selfishly, cruelly, marred the girl's fair life. If the elopement had not issued in the legal sanction of a wedding-ceremony their sentiments towards Jerry would not

have been materially different. It did not occur to either of them that the marriage would turn out otherwise than unhappily for Georgia.

"It's monstrous," the judge cried, angrily, "that a fellow like him should cut into a girl's life; involve her in a marriage that will be a curse to her as long as she lives." He sat up very straight. "I've a notion to shoot the dog!" he declared.

He knew the declaration for a mere piece of theatricals, and Bane recognized it so clearly that he did not reply. He was not in a mood for coddling anybody's vanity—which was unusual for him.

The judge dropped back. In a moment the door opened and old Melvin stood on the threshold, tiptoeing, smiling nervously and pulling at his watch-chain. The judge glanced up at him somewhat morosely. "All right, Melvin," he said, and in a moment went out and opened court.

He felt that his daughter had made a frightful mistake, but he had got so far away from a purely selfish attitude that he did not wish her punished for it. If, as he looked down with judicial gravity at the attorney's fat, argumentative forefinger he could have received a second telegram announcing the sudden demise of his son-in-law, he would have taken Georgia to rather more of his heart than she had ever occupied, and have borne the smiles of his friends at the club with tolerable equanimity.

Bane's thoughts were bitterer. Of the two his sense of actual loss was the more poignant. He was ten years Georgia's senior and he was her father's

cousin. The relationship had helped her to that attitude in respect of him where all things were permissible, except they were serious. She had heard his proposal of marriage with a kind of indignant surprise. Perhaps, in the last analysis of the instincts which would have prompted her to reject the offer whether or not Jerry had been in the account, the idea of marrying Sidney involved a subtle indecency. She had known him ever since she had known anybody; he had been much at their house. His going abroad five years before had saved her from growing into an embarrassing realization of a period when she could not have kissed him without a certain self-consciousness and self-questioning. When he returned she was eighteen, and, of course, much too old to perch on the arm of a second cousin's chair and take liberties with his hair and tie. But the change in their manner to each other, incident to the realization on her part that she was a young lady and he a young man, had come graciously, unobtrusively. On Bane's part the realization had come with epochal distinctness one day in Paris when he had just received a photograph of her taken on her eighteenth birthday. It came to him rather overpoweringly that the original was a young lady and a very pretty one. Soon after he came home.

Bane's prolonged stay abroad had been ostensibly in the interests of a pursuit of architecture. He was as well aware as any one that he had pursued a number of other things rather more ardently. Quite unexpectedly to him the zest for these pur-

suits had suddenly evaporated. The thronging artistic and other interests which had kept him in Europe three times beyond the limit of time originally set failed of their lure. In a word, he was ready to go home; even to undertake that serious pretence of being an architect of warehouses and skyscrapers which had theretofore been repugnant beyond reason. Without being rich, he had so much money that a professional career did not present itself to him in its elemental aspect of a means to bread and butter. He had been in Chicago a year. The only use he got out of his small office in the Rookery consisted in the circumstance that it was a sort of private dry-dock to which he could repair and patch up his self-injured self-respect by looking at the sign on the glass panel of the door. The sign was a proof tangible to himself that he was following the tradition of his country in making a serious attempt to earn his own living. He had not been entirely commissionless, however. The Lake Michigan Car Company had given him several incidental things to do in the way of designs for a row of operatives' cottages and for a new engine-house, and he had done the things with taste and considerable skill. He pocketed the company's checks with a grimly humorous knowledge that they were fruits rather of his social pull than of his industry; but they represented good money for all that.

Of late he had built considerably on the memory of those checks and on the hope of future employment by the company. He had begun to regard

himself very complacently in a future in which he should be sufficiently accounted for in respect of the inevitable Chicago question, What's his business? But in that future Georgia had been the central figure. He had made no very tangible steps towards the career he desired. He had carefully mapped out a number of campaigns for business—campaigns which comported with his new conception of himself as a “hustler” of a graceful and dignified sort. But he had never got beyond the mere mapping. There were so many places to go—although he did not particularly care about going to them. There were so many things to do—although he found no particular satisfaction in doing them. Sometimes, in moments of dejection, he wondered whether in those five European years, so full of multifarious idlings, he had not wholly lost the faculty of concentration, the gift of going along a single course.

He had not taken Georgia's rejection of his proposal quite seriously. Her marriage was therefore so unexpected to him that it lost nothing of its tragic force. Sitting alone in the judge's chamber he had the sense, without exactly acknowledging it, that she had suddenly cut him off from a career upon which he was just prepared to enter with every assurance of success; that she had spoiled his plans—and, as so often happens, the plans, spoiled, seemed far more important and precious than they had ever seemed when they bore their original chance of success. He conceived of himself, therefore, with thoughts which were very painful even though

they were vague and not strictly related to the facts, as one who had been suddenly and ruthlessly thrust back from his own. Beyond all that was in the nature of self-coddling, however, there was a very genuine and honest ache at Bane's heart, for he loved Georgia. He felt very sorry for her; and he got by degrees to the dignified attitude where he resolved to go relentlessly ahead architecting. He had a glimpse of himself, white-haired, honored, but dead-hearted. He got up abruptly and went to the elevator just as though he were going out to lay his two hands upon such a polite blood-and-iron destiny, and when he had sternly put aside his first impulse to go and take a drink he got a large degree of satisfaction out of the fact, as though it constituted a sort of formal baptism of this new idea of himself.

On the way back from Wisconsin Jerry and Georgia discussed the elopement from the standpoint of the material which it obviously afforded for a newspaper story. Jerry took some comfort to himself, and gave Georgia some on account of his newspaper relations and the probability that he could get the news suppressed if the papers got word of it. They congratulated themselves that they had chosen an out-of-the-way place in Wisconsin instead of Milwaukee, so that there was little probability of an account of the marriage being telegraphed in. Still, Jerry said they had done nothing to be ashamed of, and that they must not think of themselves as shrinking from an exposure, and Georgia agreed with him—adding, "But I'd

rather the newspapers said nothing about it; they always write up those elopements in such a silly way." In a word, they stood very squarely on their indubitable legal and social rights—after they had taken long breaths and consciously braced themselves for that independent attitude. Jerry suggested as a whim that they go to the little hotel where he had stayed when he came to Chicago, and Georgia humored the whim—both being distinctly aware that the whim came in conjunction with the fact that the little hotel was outside the beaten track of the reporters.

Jerry went back to his desk in *The Evening Call* office and found himself doing the old things in the old way as though nothing unusual had happened. What was more, even in the first week, he discovered himself so immersed in work, or so engaged in talk, that for whole minutes together he quite missed the bulging sense of an immense secret locked in his breast.

Georgia, meantime, was flat-hunting. They easily agreed on a few elementary requirements—as that the flat must have at least five rooms and a bath; that the rooms must have outside light; that the location must be on the north side near the park; that the rent must not exceed \$30 a month. The problem involved seemed very simple; indeed, as they agreed upon these easy conditions, sitting in their stuffy little room at the hotel, it struck them that all flats must be about like that; they could scarcely believe that any one would construct a flat which did not meet conditions so obviously modest and

necessary. But when they took their simple conditions into the world of actual flats, they found difficulties. Indeed, they found little else. The first day Georgia was indignant at discovering that flats advertised as most desirably located were really over saloons, and that others which the list praised for their advantage of a quiet neighborhood were on streets where the cable cars ran and trade abounded. When Jerry got back to the hotel that afternoon he was surprised to be greeted, not with the announcement of the location of their future home, but with a wail of mingled despair and resentment. Next day he got off earlier and joined in the quest—cumbrously and helplessly at first, standing in the doorway and gaping while Georgia dived into closets and tried water-taps and inquired about the heat with a forethought which seemed to Jerry really remarkable, and which, he felt sure, impressed the agent. It was only on the fourth day that they compromised on a flat by sacrificing nearly everything they had agreed to insist on. It was a mile from the park, it had six rooms and a bath and a west front and furnace heat, and was on the third floor. It was in one of those new streets which the city has of late been throwing out ready made into the suburban quiet of old Lake View. The two blocks of cedar pavement were still palpably new; the cement walks lay spotlessly white through the bright green of the grass-plots that stretched from the uniform line of house-fronts out to the new curbing. The rows of houses on either side the street were of one

handiwork—a fact which the slight variations in the façades and the different colors of stone rather accentuated than disguised. Number 67 was in the middle of the block. The high-gabled front was of dressed sandstone ; and the steps and little porch of the same material helped the effect of a single dwelling which the architect had evidently aimed at. The deception was not apparent until you opened the broad front door and were confronted with the two entrances and the row of bell-buttons and speaking-tubes which no ingenuity in flat-construction seems able to get along without. Georgia stopped a moment to complain of them. Their effect, she declared, was as though a sign had been hung there, reading, “April Fool. This is Only a Flat Building.”

But Jerry comforted her. “You can’t fool a visitor into thinking a flat-building is a single dwelling very long, anyhow,” he said. “When you’ve made a good bluff with your front and got him inside the hall, you may as well give yourself away at once and have it over with.”

The evening of the day they returned from Wisconsin Georgia went to her father’s. She asked Jerry to go with her, but she did not insist upon it, and he said : “I think you’d best go alone now and I’ll go with you to-morrow or next day—if—if—” he hesitated for a word and concluded, impatiently, “if it turns out that way.”

The truth is, he cared nothing at all about Judge House ; did not reckon with him and acknowledged no reason why he should. He and Georgia were

satisfied, and that settled it, he thought. Oddly enough, a particular point of resentment against the judge came up in his mind. He recalled how the judge had shown him out-of-doors six months before. He had cared nothing about it then, had laughed at it. Now he considered it a reason why he should make no advances. Georgia came back from her father's looking rather grave. She said nothing to Jerry of what had happened, and she did not urge him to visit the parental fireside the next day or on any subsequent day. Jerry drew his own conclusion—namely, that it had not “turned out that way,” and he was well enough satisfied.

Coming home one day after they had got perfectly settled in the flat and had supplied all those deficiencies, such as lack of salt and tablespoons, which their first attempt at equipping the house had left, Jerry found a very stylish hansom with a liveried driver turning around before the house. He ran up-stairs, however, unwarned, and bolted into the presence of two strange young ladies. Georgia came over and presented him, and he had a miserable ten minutes while the young ladies talked to him and he writhed under a sense of their calling upon him to give an account of himself, to explain himself, to show himself off. Then he made a clumsy excuse and edged towards the dining-room door.

“Oh, do you go to work so early?” asked Miss Markham, a tall girl with blue eyes, who looked at him kindly, so that he felt he might be friends with

her if he could get rid of the sense of being on probation.

"Early?" he repeated, foolishly.

"I thought journalists went to work at dark and worked all night," she said.

"No," said Jerry, "my work is all in the daytime."

"The all-night kind were the old style," Georgia put in. "They used to burn the midnight oil, but electric lights are too expensive. They do it in the daytime now."

Jerry made his escape, wondering why he could not have said something besides the stupid things he did say. Thereafter if he saw a carriage before the door, or even in the neighborhood, he went into the little backyard and stayed there until he thought the coast was clear.

Georgia's course in respect of her fashionable friends seemed to him entirely admirable. She let him slide out when he got caught as by Miss Markham and her companion, and she did not insist upon his going to places. She went to her father's now and then, but she had little to say to her husband about it.

"I'm sorry papa feels as he does about it," she said to Jerry one evening when they had been married a month; "but I can't help it. I've got you, and I know he'll feel differently when he sees how good you are to me and how happy we are."

They had their youth and happiness like the recurrent theme in a fugue to sweep away all their

differences and difficulties. They had differences and difficulties; but they were not serious.

Jerry gave himself to his wife rather more completely than he really wished to—so largely, indeed, that he found comparatively little time for himself. He did this because he wished to make up to her as much as he could what she had lost in marrying him. Georgia, for her part, seemed to have accepted Jerry and his world completely; to have transplanted herself to it entirely, and that was exactly what he wished. He was constantly moved to admiration and a grateful accession of affection by the good faith with which she made the sacrifices demanded by the conditions; but he never told her of it, because he felt it to be a topic on which the least said the better. It seemed to him perfectly natural, perfectly right, that Georgia in loving and marrying him should accept his environment and divorce herself from the old. Now and then, however, he got an unpleasant glimpse of the sacrifice which that involved for her—as when, for instance, he found her one afternoon looking in an unhappy sort of way at a number of slips of paper. There was a bill from the milliner, one from the dry-goods store, one from the livery stable; in all some \$50.

“I didn’t know they’d be so much, dear,” she said; “I’ll never do it again. I never would have imagined money went so fast,” she added, helplessly.

She was so genuinely confounded and disheartened about it that Jerry felt a sense of shame, as

though the narrow limits of his income convicted him of a kind of unworthiness. He made a show of generously protesting against her self-reproach, and of combating her determination to get along without the things the bills were for ; but in the end he yielded helplessly to the inexorable necessity, just as she had done. He then realized somewhat sadly that all their love and hope, all his loyalty to her and her surrender to him, neither made their dollars more nor abated in the least the necessity of reckoning, perhaps haggling, with the butcher and grocer.

Jerry discovered also, after he had offered her his social sphere and she had accepted it, that he really had no sphere. When they were settled in the flat and Georgia had got the young girl to help in the kitchen for whom she had looked so long and who was such a trial after she was found, she asked Jerry why he did not have some of his friends to the house. She suggested that he might, informally, yet by prearrangement, get two or three of them up to dinner some night. After Jerry had stared helplessly at the proposition a moment, he was compelled to confess to her that he had no friends, as she conceived of friends. It was true he knew a good many young men and liked a number of them very well ; but without knowing whether they were married or single, and still less without an adequate idea as to whether, in the unknown region of home, their mode of life was what would be called respectable or otherwise. There was none among them to whom he could proffer

such an invitation without a sense of doubt and embarrassment in himself or without surprise to the invited. He did get Bashford and then Dillingham, and he could see that Georgia captured them at once, as she had the gift of doing, but they did not offer to come again.

Still he and Georgia were by no means without their own resources of amusement. Jerry rather overworked his professional prerogative of passes. They went often to the theatre, and they took short rides on the lake of an evening or a Sunday. They were, in fact, quite gay. The romance of life was real and unfailing for them. Because they were for the most part very happy their difficulties melted away in jokes. Georgia had times of worrying over the accounts, which she kept in a wonderful way of her own, in a little morocco-covered book. If she called in Jerry's assistance it seemed the funniest thing in the world to him that she put down the amount which she still owed the milkman along with the amount she had paid the iceman. After Georgia indignantly resented his joking they usually compromised on playing at capping verses, tearing the blank leaves out of the back of the account-book for that purpose.

Georgia found something delightful in the perfect freedom of their lives. After the theatre they went to a convenient restaurant for their supper, and Georgia shared the bottle of beer which Jerry thought necessary to the occasion. If they missed the last cable-car and had to take a horse-car, they seldom failed to get their joke out of it. Now

and then Mrs. Leslie Dayton and her husband went with them, through prearrangement at the newspaper office between Jerry and the society editor. Georgia's friend, Mrs. Walker, was sometimes of the party. Of all Georgia's friends, Mrs. Walker was the only one whom Jerry took to himself in any degree. At first, even in her case it was less a matter of his taking than of her giving.

Mr. Walker was a son of that Walker whose name was a household word over the Northwest, conveyed on bottles of pickles and cans of tea and baking-powder—Walker the great wholesale grocer. There was a fiction that Walker junior was in business with his father. He had a desk in the great warehouse on River Street, which he seldom troubled with his presence, and an allowance respecting which he was much more punctual. Jerry remembered him because in his early reportorial experience he had been sent to interview the man when a noted comic opera singer sued him for breach of promise. That had been the month after Walker's marriage to Miss Prine. A year later Jerry had seen him in police-court on the morning following a raid by the police on a club organized, without immodest publicity, by a coterie of swift young men, and humorously styled "Under the Hat." Young Walker was one of a baker's dozen of prisoners whose presence in the dirty, evil-smelling court-room afforded much amusement to the crowd of male and female toughs, and called out the best reportorial talent of the newspapers.

Mr. Walker, in short, lent his wife no aid in what-

ever heart-breaking woman's shifts and prevarications she would have resorted to for the purpose of concealing that she was married to a spendthrift and a rake. Those who did not know her well expected an application for a divorce.

As for Mrs. Walker, without ever pretending that it was other than as it was, since what everybody knew of her husband's life rendered that futile, she made of her forlornness a becoming garment. She was a plump, dark little woman, with a clear, firm whiteness of skin and fine, frank brown eyes. She was five years older than Georgia, to whom, through some inscrutable affectionate selection, she came oftener than to any one else. Sometimes she brought her little girl and stayed out the afternoon, and perhaps only Georgia and Jerry knew how impossible it was for her to stay at home at these times.

These five, Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Dayton and Mrs. Walker and Jerry and Georgia, sometimes made up a little party; and even Jerry was more or less aware that for at least three of them it was like the diversions of the expatriated French nobles; that they were merry perforce in those circumstances since happier ones were denied them. He hoped it was not that way with Georgia; that she, like himself, recognized that the cheap and popular amusements which were open to them were just as good really as the expensive and exclusive ones that were beyond them. But he could not always be perfectly sure.

It was at Jerry's suggestion that they went one

Sunday evening to a public garden north of the park. They went down through the garden to a big platform strewn with small, square, solid green tables and solid green chairs. Several hundred people sat about at the tables, eating and drinking and listening to the band at the farther end. The platform extended over the lake shore, and where Jerry's party sat next the low railing the sound and impact of the waves on the piling below were very palpable, making a kind of rhythmic bass through the chatter of voices, the click of glasses and dishes and the jolly music of the band. The big, shed-like roof was hung with a score of arc lamps suffusing the place with light. At their backs was the vast, mysterious darkness over the lake. Far out in it the lights of a big excursion steamer, inbound, moved spectrally. The people were perfectly decorous and very well dressed. Except that here and there was a party of bicyclists in their athletic costumes, and save for the beer and eatables, the assemblage might have been the audience at a fashionable church.

Georgia affected to find it charmingly Bohemian, and Jerry wisely refrained from shattering the illusion by confessing that, aside from going to church, it was about the properest thing, socially, that he knew how to do.

Georgia leaned back in her chair and surveyed the scene carefully. "It makes me feel so jolly and wicked and lost," she announced.

"What does?" said Mrs. Dayton, peering at her in an amused way.

"To be in a beer garden Sunday night," Georgia replied—"with a newspaper reporter," she added to Jerry. "Let's have some beer in those big stone mugs with pewter covers. Can we?"

"Certainly," said Jerry; "in fact, it comes cheaper that way."

"But I guess we'd best not," she said hastily after a glance about; "all the nicest women seem to be taking theirs in glasses." When the waiter was despatched with the order she said, with lingering regret, "It looks a good deal more beery in the mugs, though."

"Of course you wish to feel that you're being wicked and lost in the very properest way," said Dayton.

"Yes, you can understand that," Georgia retorted. "Jerry can't. So far as being proper goes, Jerry is just a big blue mug with a pewter cover anyway. That's why I drew the lines at the other mugs. The party couldn't stand them and Jerry too."

Jerry did not find much time for talking. He kept looking at his wife and admiring her. Whether she listened or laughed or spoke, there was constantly a new charm in her for him.

"Oh, dear," Mrs. Walker complained as the band struck up again. "Why doesn't the band go away? The waves are so much better."

"The band is earning its \$2.50 per diem for its wives and many children," said Jerry.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Dayton, thoughtfully; "the music doesn't amount to much, but it sort of

partitions you off from the other people; it gives you a noise to be alone in."

Georgia looked around at her. "Is that kind?" she said, gravely. "As I remember it I have been doing most of the talking."

In the laugh that followed Jerry was aware of a tall figure, lightly and loosely clad, smoking a cigarette and fingering a cane and looking at them half hesitatingly. The next instant Georgia glanced up and cried out, "Why, Sidney Bane! I thought you were in Wisconsin."

"I just flitted back," said Bane, coming up to the table, "to get a good hot whiff of baked brick and mortar and remind myself of what I was escaping."

"Oh," said Georgia, throwing herself back in her chair, "is it cool at the lake?" Jerry recognized a sudden longing in her voice, and before he was aware she was saying, hastily, "You haven't met my husband."

Jerry got up and took the extended hand.

"I just missed meeting Mr. Drew, I think," said Bane, easily. There was an instant which Jerry felt to be intolerably awkward without having the skill to relieve it; then Bane went on, lightly, gayly, "Hullo, Dayton; Mrs. Dayton, are you leading your husband astray, or is he leading you? Mrs. Walker."

Georgia moved along to make room and Dayton swung an empty chair beside her. Bane sat down and in a moment Georgia was asking about those at the lake, and a lively talk was going on in which

Jerry had no part. Each name came up with an association of common knowledge, common interest, to the others. Bane talked lightly, gracefully, well. Jerry acknowledged that. Georgia cut in constantly with questions about this one and that. Mrs. Dayton, Mrs. Walker, Dayton himself, caught up her suggestions or Bane's adroit hints. The skein of talk wove back and forth swiftly, gayly, turning upon persons and events unknown to Jerry, or known only vaguely through newspaper reports.

When they rose to go, Bane, as though it were a matter of course, walked ahead beside Georgia. As they advanced over the platform a big, spectacled man who sat alone at a far table looked up and smiled benevolently at their animated faces, at the gay lilt of their voices. His eye dwelt a moment on them in good-humored approval, then turned questioningly to the rather glum young man marching alone behind them. Perhaps Mrs. Walker divined the glance. Anyhow, she stepped aside and joined Jerry as they went from the platform to the pleasant dark of the grove. The touch of her woman's hand on his arm comforted him some way, and moved him with gratitude towards her.

"How hard the path is to find after the light!" said she, peering at the dim ground.

"I guess it's all path except where the trees are," said Jerry.

On the street corner, where they waited for the cable-car, Georgia and Bane and Mr. and Mrs. Dayton clung close together, talking and laughing, and Jerry and Mrs. Walker stood a little apart. In

the garden he had seen Georgia take the lily from Bane's lapel with the cool assurance which denotes a certain appropriation of a man. He had heard her call him Sidney once or twice. Now she was saying, "But that's Sidney's way; he was always awfully conceited about women."

Jerry looked away from her pretty, laughing, up-turned face—not far from Bane's—with a pang of helpless jealousy. As his glance fell it surprised a grave, questioning look from Mrs. Walker, and he flushed slightly. He took Mrs. Walker to the front end of the car when it came up, while the others climbed on at the rear. When the car pulled away he saw Georgia looking around for him.

"Oh, I thought I'd lost you, Jeremiah!" she said as he came up, and she slipped her hand inside his arm. She began at once telling him some of the things Bane had been saying about the people at the lake and the fishing and other delights there. He offered her no encouragement, and they turned into their own street in silence. As soon as he had lit the gas in the flat Georgia burst out abruptly:

"Jerry! don't you suppose—" she came over and put her hands on his shoulders and looked up at him in an odd, dubious, adorable way she had when she wished to apologize beforehand for something—"don't you suppose, dear, that you could get away for a couple of weeks and we could go up to the lake? It seems to me"—she laughed a dolorous little confession of her weakness—"I'll just expire if I don't."

"Wouldn't the little red account-book be rather out of its depth up there?" Jerry asked.

Her arms dropped to her side. "Yes," she said, seriously, "I guess it would. Oh, dear!" She glanced up again and saw the unhappiness in his face. "But never mind," she said, comfortingly, "we'll have an enormous purple account-book some day, won't we?" She caught his head between her palms and gave it a little, affectionate shake. "You're a good boy, anyhow," she said, "even if we have to keep our accounts on a shingle."

XIV

A COUPLE of days later Mrs. Walker came to Georgia's, bringing her child. The little one trotted around the room, laboriously piling and unpiling books and other small portables while the women talked.

"I expect Jerry home early because we're going to wheel down and shoot the chutes," said Georgia.

"How attentive to you he is!" said Mrs. Walker.

"He'd best be," Georgia replied, jokingly, with a shake of her head; "there's no telling what I might do." Then she added, gravely, "He's as good as he can be—as much like a lover as any husband could be." She said this wisely, as though her knowledge of husbands and lovers were unlimited.

"Like a lover?" said Mrs. Walker, half as though it were a joke. "Jealous, then, I suppose?"

Georgia glanced at her in surprise; then dismissed it. "Jerry jealous! How ridiculous! There's nobody for him to be jealous of."

"I suppose he could find somebody," said Mrs. Walker. "They usually do, don't they? Isn't that part of being a lover?"

But Georgia would not regard it seriously. "Jerry wouldn't dare be jealous," she said, "unless I told him he might."

"He might get it into his head that you had permitted it," said Mrs. Walker.

Georgia looked to her squarely. "What are you driving at, Susan?" she demanded, a little resentfully.

"At Mr. Sidney Bane," said Mrs. Walker, decisively.

Georgia fell back in her chair with an effect of collapse and stared at her friend.

"It occurred to me at the garden the other night," said Mrs. Walker.

By that time Georgia had got her breath and begun to laugh. "Why, it's utterly preposterous," she cried. "Sidney! Oh, dear!" and she laughed again.

"No doubt you're right, dear," said Mrs. Walker, gravely. In a moment they began talking of something else.

When Mrs. Walker had gone Georgia went up to Jerry's photograph on the mantel and looked at it carefully. It struck her, looking at the picture, that he was graver than she had ever thought him; that there was a basis of earnestness and sadness in him which, perhaps, she had made too little account of. "You dear goose!" she said to the picture.

It was perfectly ridiculous that he should be jealous of Sidney. But now that the thing forced her to believe a little of it, it did not make him ridiculous to her. On the contrary, it was as though she had discovered some secret misfortune, defect in him; as though she had found that he was a cripple, and she felt all the more tenderness towards

him on account of this weakness, as one loves an ailing child most.

Jerry came in later than she had expected. There was a line between his brows and he pushed his hat to the back of his head—signs that he was tired.

"I don't believe I can go down there with you this evening," he began, a little doubtfully and apologetically. "The Minneapolis *Trumpet* has called for a special on the street-car meeting. I came up to let you know. I've got some of the stuff, and I'll have to hurry right back so I can file it by 7.30. You see, I haven't done much for them lately—"

"I don't want you to do much for them," Georgia broke in, imperiously. "I know you're doing this extra work on my account, and I won't have it. There, sir! No, Jerry," she perched on the arm of his chair; "you work hard enough, anyhow, too hard. You can send them the evening paper account, as you did the other time. It's good enough for them. Who cares about an old street-car meeting, anyway?—and everybody ought to care about a scowl like that." With her thumb she ironed out the crease in his forehead.

In the end she had her way. When she used a kind of impetuous cajolery with him he was quite helpless. It was as though she fired at him with her whole armament of coquetry, tenderness, piquancy at once, and he could do nothing but surrender. He felt it wrong to give up the Minneapolis special; but he merely laughed helplessly and did as she wished. After all, he thought, with a sigh, this time wouldn't hurt.

It was only out of an access of tenderness that Georgia insisted upon his going. She wished to have him with her just then because she wished to make him happy, to show him how much she cared for him. What Mrs. Walker had said lingered in her mind.

A couple of days later, in his mail at *The Evening Call* office, Jerry found a letter from the Minneapolis *Trumpet*. It was signed by the managing editor and it said, very briefly, that the paper had made other arrangements for its special news service from Chicago.

Jerry tore the letter across angrily and flung it in the waste-basket. Then he quailed before it, for he knew in his heart that his dismissal was just. The paper paid him for the space his telegrams occupied in its columns. He did the work mostly in the afternoon and evening, when his work for *The Evening Call* was finished, and he had been aware, almost from the day of his marriage, that he had treated it unfairly. So many afternoons he had hurried away to keep some appointment with Georgia; so many times he had hastened home for a reason that seemed particular to that day. He had taken to clipping things from the early editions of the afternoon papers and sending them on with only hasty, slipshod revisings; or, other times, he had neglected altogether things that should have been looked up. He was sufficiently in the editorial attitude to know that his despatches had lately lacked the crispness and originality which had given them value. He had been uneasily aware of it, and

had promised himself that, next day, next week, he would do something to redeem himself. In the end he had gone on scamping and shirking because he seemed never to have any time. He relied largely upon the reputation he had made with the paper before his marriage by some particularly valuable work. He now saw that he had relied too far. He thought of it very soberly. That night he surprised Georgia by coming late to dinner and bringing with him a big pad of blank paper. He had been detained by some work, he told her, and he had some more to do. As soon as she saw that he was in earnest she gave way to him, and even helped to get the chair and stand into the unfurnished spare bedroom which they had set apart for his workroom. After peering in once or twice to see how he looked editing, Georgia found a book and sat down in the dining-room with a sense and effect of being very much at home. When Jerry came out about eleven o'clock he found her asleep on the lounge. Before he came out he stretched back in his chair to enjoy for a moment the luxury of being tired. He stared up into his own smoke and glanced now and then at the little heap of manuscript on the stand. He had almost forgotten, he told himself, how good it felt to be tired. "I've wasted a lot of time," he said. For a moment he felt it acutely. Then the strong youthful hope in him roused. "I'll make up for it, with interest," he added. Meantime the dismissal from the Minneapolis paper cost him a fifth of his income.

XV

MRS. HESS sat on next to the lowest of the six steps leading up from the broken sidewalk to the dingy front door of the boarding-house. When her face was in repose it seemed worn and worried to a kind of pathetic refinement. She was looking down the street without observing anything in particular. Now and then, absent-mindedly, she gave the tail of her big calico apron an ineffectual upward flirt towards her face in a rudimentary attempt at fanning herself. For although it was late in September by the calendar, it was dog-days by the thermometer.

On all the door-steps people sat, the men in their shirt-sleeves. Swarms of children played over the ruinous wooden pavement. Across the street a milkman was laboriously backing his wagon into a little frame barn fronting on the street. Two or three of the lots on that side had not been brought up to grade, and the front doors of the small, dingy houses were reached by steps leading down from the sidewalk. The sickly, dusty foliage on the two box alder-trees in front of the Hess place offered the only show of green in the block. Nearby, high over the little dwellings, towered the huge brick chimney of a brewery, from the top of which a still pennon of smoke trailed.

Bashford and Mabel had brought out chairs and were sitting against the front of the house, where the steps shaded them from the pale light of the street-lamp on the corner. The girl was bare-headed. She wore a white dress, with open work in the sleeves and at the breast. Bashford tilted his chair in the angle where the steps joined the house, so that he could look at her without turning his head.

A young couple came by on the walk—a tall, red-cheeked girl in a calico dress, swinging her straw hat by the ribbons; the man was long-limbed, with big brown hands which he hung up by the thumbs thrust into the waistband of his trousers. He wore a shirt, but no collar, and his unbuttoned coat dangled about his lean frame. The girl glanced around and saw the pair in the shadow.

"Oh, hullo!" she called to Mabel, and smiled and nodded at Bashford.

The fellow looked around and called "Hullo!" to Mabel, and nodded in a way friendly, yet constrained, at Bashford.

"We're trying to find a cool place," said the girl.

"I guess Mrs. Casey has found one," said Mabel. A stout, middle-aged woman, bareheaded, was coming across the street from the small saloon opposite, carrying a pitcher of beer, holding it up to her stout breast.

"You wanta rush the growler, Jim?" said the girl to her companion, rallying him.

Jim shook his head. "No beer fer me!" he said,

firmly. The girl glanced up at him admiringly and they walked on.

"They're going to be married next month," said Mabel, when they had gone.

It was simple enough and commonplace enough, yet Bashford turned sharply in his chair to glance after the teamster and his sweetheart, and a sudden sense of loss gripped him. This marriage seemed somehow Arcadian, of the beautiful, free, innocent love, an ideal of which stays down in the bottom of the heart in spite of many sophisticating experiences.

An unlooked-for impulse moved him. He brought down his chair and leaned towards the girl.

"Would you go with me, Mamsie, where they are going?" he asked.

Mabel looked quickly around at him with parted lips. In a moment, with an effect of repressing the look of surprise, she answered, quietly, "You know I would, Jack."

It was so simple, so loyal, so complete, that for a moment he felt the warm outflow of affection for her as of something tangible, ponderable, in his breast. Then the supreme sense of devotion failed as swiftly as it had come. He straightened up and threw his chair back at its former angle almost violently. It came to him sharply and bitterly in the sudden failing of his swift dream that the other couple were really going nowhere save down the grimy, ragged perspective towards the foul river.

The girl lifted her head and looked at him with

a kind of pride which was without the reserve of pride. "Did you ask just for curiosity?" she said.

"Oh no," he replied quickly, impatiently. "I asked because—we can talk to each other frankly, I guess."

She looked away. "I don't see but that we have talked frankly enough," she said, a little bitterly. "I don't see why you keep coming here; I don't see that there's anything more to say on either side."

"I don't come because there's anything to say. I come because I must—absolutely must."

"Then why did you ask me that?" she persisted, but in a mollified tone.

"Why—I suppose for a moment I could believe it was all true—all possible—just what that fellow believes."

"And isn't it true?"

"No—not for me."

"Why?"

"Because after the moment passed those two seemed to me merely stupid and pitiable. I'm honestly sorry for them. Otherwise they're uninteresting."

"You'd find them interesting if they were going to get a divorce instead of get married," she flashed back at him. And in an instant she blushed and added, confusedly, "I didn't mean that."

"No," he said, absolvingly; "but you don't understand—"

"I don't understand why you're always saying

something nasty about the good, honest, decent things—like marriage,” she said, valiantly.

Bashford brought down his chair again and leaned forward, looking at the ground.

“I knew a married man,” he began, in a low tone; “a man who married when he was very young—married a girl a couple of years older than himself—a pretty, sprightly sort of girl—and he went around worshipping her in his infantile way until he found a letter written to her by another man. Then he went away, and after that he spoke disrespectfully of marriage.”

His voice ceased, and in the silence that came up like something alive about them the girl’s hand went out impulsively and found his. He did not look up, but leaned a little towards her. She bent a little towards him, so that the exhalation of her breath came to his cheek and he knew that her lips were parted as those of one moved, surprised, abeyant.

A small, spare human figure loomed on the dusk horizon almost from their feet.

“Hadn’t you and Mr. Bashford better come in, Mabel? It’s gettin’ cooler,” said the figure, in the voice of Mrs. Hess, as it leaned over the railing of the steps beside them.

Mabel withdrew her hand hastily and got up. Bashford arose, too, and lifted her chair over the railing to the landing in front of the dingy door. For a moment her eyes shone up at him through the dusk. Her face, in the dim light, looked like marble. She looked down quickly and stepped away.

"Aren't you coming in?" she asked, at the foot of the stairs, with another quick look into his face.

"I must go back," he answered.

A slim youngster in a gingham waist and knee-breeches, patched and too short for his lengthening legs, came running up. He nodded at Bashford with a boy's shy familiarity, and threw his arm impulsively about the girl's waist.

"Can't you say Good-evening to Mr. Bashford, Freddie?" said Mabel, reprovingly, putting her hand fondly on the boy's shoulder.

"Freddie and I said Good-evening 'cross lots," said Bashford.

The little fellow and the tall girl went up the steps together, his slim arm around her waist. Mrs. Hess was on the landing putting in the chairs.

"Am I late, grandma?" Freddie asked her.

For a moment the three stood by the dingy door, Bashford looking up at them. Her hand on the knob, Mabel turned her head and looked down at him. "Good-night, Jack!" she said.

- She had never before addressed him by that familiar name in another's presence. The loyalty which the name and tone thus evidenced before the best of her small world moved Bashford strangely.

"Good-night!" he called; but the door closed on them before he stirred. A tide of self-reproach, self-reprobation, swept him. He marvelled at himself as at something uniquely villanous. As he rode home he began a singular kind of fence with

himself in which, as he knew in his soul, he had predestined that he should lose. He knew clearly that in giving her a glimpse of his unhappy marriage he had set a trap for her sympathy. He spurned himself for it. He thought of her generous love for him, of Freddie, her mother. He condemned himself with his tongue, and down in his heart he thought of those warm, soft fingers within his, of her eyes shining up at him through the dusk, and in an instant he was exulting tumultuously. His nerves were in a riot like those of a thief who has snatched the prize and is rushing away with it, exulting but fearing.

There came back to him an interview he had several years before with a janitor who had stolen \$20,000 from the country bank in which he worked and started for Canada. The janitor was an intelligent young man, educated beyond his position; but he had lost his right hand in an accident. He told Bashford how he planned the robbery down to the small details, half pretending to himself that it was merely a fancy; how day after day he had thought it over, still pretending not to be in earnest about it; how when the day on which he was to act came he had kept saying to himself, "I'll never do it, though; I'll not steal; I'm no thief." When it came time to go to bed in the back room of the bank he thought that one of the officers or clerks might come in during the early part of the night, having forgotten something, and that in such a case it would arouse suspicion if he were not undressed and in bed as usual. Therefore he un-

dressed and went to bed just as usual, saying to himself, "I'll not do it; I'll not steal." He got up half an hour before the east-bound train went through and dressed in the dark, listening intently for any sound from without, but all the time saying to himself, "No, I'll not steal; it would be too sneaking; the bankers have befriended me." He crept to the vault and entered in the way he had carefully provided for and took the money, saying to himself, even as he held the packages in his hand, "I'll not steal this money; I'm no thief." Then he felt his way to the back door and let himself out, clutching the roll of bills in his overcoat-pocket. The night wind blew in his face; he saw the immense free void above him, and then he tossed aside the pretence as though it had been a mask, and walked to the station and took the train quite cool, hardy, ready.

Once in his room, Bashford went straight to a small box in his trunk, unlocked it, and took out an envelope marked with age and handling. The letter inside was not a long one. It was written in a woman's hand. Bashford sat down deliberately and read it through. It began "Forgive me," and it ended "Forgive me."

The date was five years back, but the cry came to Bashford plaintive, earnest, piercing as though that unhappy wife had spoken in his ear. He got up and looked around the room. "Why," he said aloud, "they'll kick me out of hell if they have any self-respect there."

He stood for a moment looking about as though

challenging an answer. Then he dropped back in the chair. He knew that it could not have been different; that it was never in him to forgive that offence. He took a Canadian postal-order from his pocket, folded it inside a blank sheet of paper, and enclosed it in an envelope which he sealed and directed. It was a comfort to him to remember that he had sent the orders with tolerable regularity. He wondered incidentally what the child was like. When he went to bed an hour later he slept very soundly, as his custom was.

XVI

JERRY sat in his den hurrying to finish the article about women and the street-cars which he hoped to sell to *The Sunday Clarion*. When Georgia sailed in he looked up, but his thoughts were still at the point of his pen.

Georgia dashed up to him, stooped forward swiftly, and shook a big bunch of roses in his face. "Aren't they pretty?" she cried, with a kind of childish triumph in them. She had on a smooth, dark dress, and a bonnet with a huge bow in front that Jerry felt to be ridiculous, but which became her so well that he forbore to force his joke about it. Her cheeks were touched with color from the crisp air, and for a moment she infected him with her dash and gayety as well as alluring him with her prettiness. He put aside the pad of paper in his lap, caught her wrists and pulled her down to his knee. As soon as she could make her smothered protests heard, he gathered from the muffled exclamations and from her ineffectual struggles that she was apprehensive about the flowers. When he released her a little she pushed away from him and, still sitting on his knee, she lectured him volubly with a pretty simulation of indignation.

"Talk about the littleness of my bonnet!" she

cried as she rearranged the rescued bunch of roses. "If I wore a big bonnet you'd mash it to splinters. Bear!" She thrust the roses into his smiling face as though she were beating him away with them; then she peered at him over them in a way that nearly brought about a recurrence of the conduct she had objected to.

"You haven't said whether or not they're pretty," she added, with a lightning change which he had found one of the many deliciously bewildering things about her.

"Yes, they're pretty," he said, and added, merely from curiosity, "How much did they cost?"

"Heavens! You don't suppose I bought them? We're not indulging in such roses this October, Jeremiah—not unless we're going to swear off paying the grocer. Sidney gave them to me, and took me for a delightful drive." She turned to her husband with a sudden grave entreaty, saying, just a little reproachfully, "I wish you'd like Sidney better, Jerry."

"Do you think he minds?" Jerry answered, with a lightness which was wholly affected. "If he does, he's concealed it well enough; he's offered up his damask cheek to the worm in the bud without a murmur."

"No? I don't suppose he minds," she said, candidly; "but I do."

"You needn't," Jerry answered, still with simulated lightness. "Bane's all right, and I hope I'm all right, too; but it doesn't follow that we have any particular use for each other."

"You don't like him," she said, making it contingently an accusation.

"Not especially," Jerry answered, a little irritated.

"Well, I do," Georgia replied, challengingly.

"That ought to satisfy him," said Jerry, tolerantly.

"I don't believe," she said, altogether accusingly this time, "that you care for anybody except Bashford and me and one or two."

Jerry thought of it a moment. "No," he said, "I guess I don't—in the way you mean."

She stared at him a moment, then her mind seemed to switch again. "You're a funny boy," she declared, as though she rather liked him for it.

"I was always considered a comical dog," said he, subtly offended.

"I mean you don't seem to care for anybody or anything much except one or two bodies and things that you care for a lot," she said, trusting him to find his way to her sense through such difficulties as the phraseology presented.

He did not attempt to defend himself from this implication of eccentricity, and Georgia went out to put her roses in water and see that the dinner was coming on, while Jerry put his mind back to his writing as reluctantly as he had taken it away.

He wondered, sadly sometimes, whether he did wrong in not getting her to understand more of what he thought and meant, in not trying to understand more of what she thought and meant. But the affirmative answer involved its difficulties; the

experiments he had made had not been encouraging. He had not been able to find out that she thought and meant much of anything; and he had an idea that she was without the experience by which he could interpret to her such meanings as he supposed himself to have. She knew of his work only as something that occupied nearly all his time and produced a certain sum of money—never half enough; and he knew of her that she went out of afternoons to meet people he did not know and do things respecting which he had neither knowledge nor curiosity. He understood in a general way that she was taken driving or making calls or being called on. He had no objection intrinsically to the little amusements she engaged in; but he had no interest in them, either. He could comfort himself somewhat by reflecting that this was only an exaggeration of a common condition; that most wives had not the least idea what their husbands were doing, even when the husbands were doing nothing they would care to conceal, and that many admired, properly trusted wives lived in thoughts or even acts which were far and foreign to their husbands. In considering his own particular case the question of money always came foremost. He knew that she had to make many sacrifices which must be irksome. It humiliated him to see another man spend the little sums for her pleasure which his own income was unequal to, as in the case of Bane's flowers—and whatever the case was, Bane was usually the man. In his heart he blamed Georgia for accepting these things so

lightly, as though she thereby confessed his inability to care for her in a fitting way. The spur of this was in his side perpetually. Since the shaking up he got by the discharge from the Minneapolis *Trumpet* he neglected none of his opportunities, such as they were. He worked unremittingly at his correspondence, at special articles, at such journalistic wood-chopping and snow-shovelling as he could get to do. The product was pitifully inadequate. It was a laborious gathering of five dollars here and six there, when he needed hundreds, thousands. At first Georgia tried to tempt him into relaxations by coaxing him to go wheeling or driving or to take her some place. In the main, he stuck doggedly to his plan of one evening in the week and a part of Sunday afternoon for recreation.

He could not blame his own inability to make money very seriously. It was therefore natural, perhaps inevitable, that he took to blaming the ability of such as had it. In this he found Dillingham an immense comfort. Dillingham blamed so impartially and picturesquely.

"The trouble behind all this tommyrot about over-production and no demand," said Dillingham, "is that the cusses who've got the goods make the conditions of getting them too hard. How can you say there's no demand, when in this city alone hundreds of children go underfed and barefooted and ragged? They want money for the goods, and they keep on making money harder and harder to get. It's just as though a man should start up a big bakery and make car-loads of bread, and then fix the con-

dition that only men who could jump a five-bar gate could get any bread. There's his bread mildewing, the cockroaches and rats eating it, and there are the people clamoring and trying to jump, and there's the baker complaining that there's no demand for his goods. The economic situation in this country is just like a game of freezeout between Capital and Brains and Labor. Capital and Brains have stood in cahoots and they've finally got all the chips. There sits Labor, he's willing to play—in fact, he's anxious to play; but he's got no chips. And Capital and Brains scowl at him, and ask each other why the devil that fellow doesn't play. Well"—the editor jammed his thumb into the bowl of his pipe and wiped off the ashes on the lapel of his coat—"you wait until we get socialism established here and we'll have blue chips for the babies to cut their teeth on."

They were sitting in Bashford's room at the newspaper office—Jerry and Dillingham and Bashford. The editor had been coming at them with his old invitation to go into the management of *The New Era*. Bashford took it as an immense joke.

"What could Jerry and I do in the management of *The New Era*?" he demanded. "We've no experience dodging constables."

Dillingham twinkled at the scoffer a moment in enjoyment of the joke. Then he set his faded derby hat on one side of his big head—an infallible sign that he was in earnest—and thrust out his long legs. "You won't need any," he said; "the constable will be doing the dodging the first thing you

know. But then," he added, dropping from the prophetic to the utilitarian mood, "a few dollars would come in mighty handy just now."

Bashford looked at him with the honest liking which was his finest mood. "I'll tell you," he said, seriously, "maybe I can find you a backer."

Dillingham glanced up, suspicious of a joke.

"Yes," said Bashford, reassuringly, "I know a little philanthropic Jew broker, much interested in reforming things, who might bet a few dollars on *The New Era*."

"Bring him along," said Dillingham.

"It's Ikey Frankel," said Bashford. "He was almost moved to tears the other day telling me the pathetic case of a widow whom he'd been compelled to sell out because she couldn't pay. He thought it argued a frightful state of economic error."

The philanthropic money-lender who foreclosed promptly struck Jerry as typical. A day or two later he wrote a little parable about him and gave it to Dillingham to print in *The New Era*. After that he found time, or made it, to write something for *The New Era* every week. He fell into the way of dropping in at the office and consulting with Dillingham about the paper. Although these consultations started soberly and promisingly on the dry ground of some detail, they quickly expanded and floated off into the air, into the clouds.

"The time will come, gentlemen," said Dillingham, rising into his parliamentary manner and multiplying Jerry into an audience, "when Pullman and Armour will meet a carpenter, and the carpenter

won't feel like a boy eight years old in the presence of two boys fifteen years old."

Jerry, leaning his elbows on the warped, belittered desk, smoking a cob-pipe, his hat on the back of his head, had an instant in which he felt it to be true, and exulted in it. They had begun by discussing whether or not it would be wise to spend five dollars a week in getting two cheap cuts for the paper.

The New Era had never been wholly a joke with Jerry. Before a liking for Dillingham kept him from laughing, he had a certain respect for the thing which he felt the paper to stand for. Even in the early days when it represented his poor little standing-ground — his queer, hazardous harbor in the burly, tumultuous life of the city, he had times of enthusiasm for Dillingham's hopeless, unflinching fight for it. Now his circumstances conspired to wed the potential ardor in him to the odd, misprinted altrurian venture. He had a sure ground of personal experience on which to sympathize with it; his own trouble seemed so largely of the difference between rich and poor.

"Won't you get something for your share in *The New Era* pretty soon?" Georgia asked one day. They were considering their resources.

"Well, not right away," Jerry answered, uneasily.

"Why do you keep on working for it then?" she demanded. "I think you work too hard, Jerry, to throw your work away."

"It isn't thrown away," he said. "I like what the paper stands for."

"What does it stand for?" the woman persisted.

"Well," Jerry replied, somewhat dubiously, "in a general way it stands for better times and a fairer chance for the poor."

"For the real low-down no-husband-and-seven-small-children kind of poor? or just for the respectable, tottering-on-the-verge sort like ourselves?"

"For both kinds, I guess."

"But don't you know? Seems to me if I were standing for something three nights in a week when I ought to be in bed I'd know what it was," Georgia retorted. She saw that her levity had offended him, and she burst out laughing. "I expect you'll be out here sweeping the streets or digging a ditch some day," she said, gayly. "And I'll be bringing you your dinner in a tin pail with a little cupola on it. Maybe we'll rush the growler. But you're wrong if you think there's anything the matter with the poor. They have good enough times as it is. Only yesterday a man came along here with an old horse and a high, square cart, shovelling up the street-sweepings. It was noon, and he stopped over there in the shade. He had some bread and butter done up in a piece of newspaper and tied with a string to the harness against the horse's neck. He sat down on the grass and picked the horse-hairs out of his bread and wiped it off on his shirt-sleeve a couple of times and ate it, and had the best kind of time. A man who can do that doesn't need anybody to stand for him."

Often Jerry meditated explaining *The New Era*

to Georgia ; making her see the fineness, nay, the inevitableness, of battling for the weak, even in so humble a way, with so poor a weapon. There came to him a faith that out of the very spirit in which the thing was done there would come to the way an enlargement, to the weapon a potency. He thought he could make her see how the very shabbiness of the paper was something to exult in as a kind of sack-cloth and ashes worn for faith's sake.

The actual telling, however, was delayed. He brought *The New Era* home and often showed her the things he had written, but he never detected in her just the mood which seemed propitious for firing her with the socialistic idea.

XVII

ONE evening in November, as Jerry turned into Marlborough Place, walking rapidly, he passed the lamplighter, who was trotting his zigzag course from one street-lamp to another, his long, flickering, fuming pole over his shoulder. It reminded Jerry that he was late. The first nip of winter was in the air ; the fine, crisp coldness that is quite as much a rebirth of the seasons as the first mildness of spring is. It was not entirely dark, but the light was dim enough, so that the flaming street-lamps were cozily suggestive of snug firesides. Jerry lifted his head to the exhilarating air and hurried on, not exactly smiling, but his features so disposed that a smile seemed breaking. He had work in hand.

The Seaboard and Coal Mines Railroad was in the hands of receivers. It had been the policy of the road to refuse employment to members of labor unions. This policy had been continued by the receiver, who was also the president of the road. The matter had been brought up in court, and the court, in a decision since famous, had affirmed the right of the receiver to discriminate against workmen who belonged to unions. The decision aroused intense feeling among the labor unions all over the

country. The news of the decision had come out that morning, and Jerry, eager to turn it to account for *The New Era*, had thought of a daring scheme. He knew well a certain judge, a venerable and honored man, to whose benignant friendliness he had owed some advantages in the days when he did court reporting for *The Evening Call*. It occurred to him that if he could get an interview with the judge and print it in *The New Era* he could make of it at once a good stroke for the cause and for the paper.

The judge had never heard of *The New Era* ; but Jerry had expected that, and was prepared to introduce it to him in terms as favorable as his conscience would allow. He explained as well as he could his own part in the paper, and the judge, not formally accepting the invitation to come before the public in that queer company, but good-naturedly withholding a refusal, began talking about the decision. He got up and paced back and forth as he got warmed into it, bringing up manifold scandals of railroad receiverships, of the use of injunction, of furtherance of bad ends by judicial processes.

When Jerry went down to the darkling street at five o'clock he knew well enough that what he had was of great importance, viewed merely from the journalistic standpoint. But it was precious to him beyond that, because he felt it a stroke for the right he loved, which, therefore, seemed the only important right.

He could see the interview spread over the front page of *The New Era*, with big head-lines. He

thought of trying to get a cut of the judge from the newspaper office to embellish the page with. On the way to Marlborough Place in the street-car he had kept turning it over, seeking for strong lights in which to set it. His mind was aglow towards the task. He felt a prospective pride of workmanship in it. He believed that he should make something striking of the interview. It was Thursday night, and *The New Era* went to press Friday night. The matter must therefore be ready for the printer the first thing in the morning. It meant a long evening's work; but he did not mind that. Figuratively he girded himself joyfully for the task as he let himself in with his latch-key and ran up-stairs.

Swiftly as he came, Georgia was at the door before him. As he reached the head of the stairs she darted out and caught the lapel of his coat, backing into the room before him, her face upturned to his, mischievous, capricious, radiant.

"Jerry! What do you think?" she cried, as soon as she got him inside.

Jerry paused, physically and mentally. "Well, what?" he asked, smiling.

"Well, sir"—with one finger she told off the words against the top button of his vest. "You and I are invited to the Wilcoxes' this evening—for a little dance. Just a few young married people—awfully nice people, of course, or they wouldn't be at the Wilcoxes'—that's why you and I are going." She suddenly exploded with the delight of it. She threw her arms around his neck and gave him a hug; then, catching up her apron, she tripped back

and forth triumphantly in front of him. "Yep," she cried, "just think of a dance! I haven't danced for a whole year!"

She burst out laughing at her own exuberance.

"I know you don't care much about it," she said, sobering as suddenly; "but I'm awfully glad." Perhaps his face reflected the doubts he felt. Anyhow, she paused, questioning, abeyant.

With an involuntary motion Jerry's hand went to the bundle of notes in his pocket. He wilted weakly into a chair.

"Why, I don't see how I can go, dear." He began, fumblingly. "Didn't"—he saw a straw and clutched at it—"didn't the invitation come pretty late?" He straightened up a little and tried to look something like aroused suspicion and dignity.

"Oh no," Georgia chirped, promptly and cheerfully. "You see, it had the wrong address, and the stupid post-office people would never have got it to us in time. But Clara Wilcox saw Mrs. Dayton, and somehow it came out that they had it Marlborough Street, which is over on the west side, instead of Marlborough Place. Then Clara came right up here—that was this morning—to see if we had it. There's a Marlborough Avenue on the south side and a Marlborough Square in Englewood, and of course they'd have sent it here last of all, so we'd have missed it."

Georgia saw through Jerry's shabby little pretence of standing on his dignity; but she was in so anxious a mood that she would sacrifice everything with the greatest sweetness—save the main point.

Jerry recognized that he had got himself in a false position by putting forward the pretence, but now that he had put it forward the real reason seemed difficult of presentation, and he clutched at another straw.

"But I've nothing to wear," he said.

"Oh, I thought of that!" Georgia replied, promptly. "I went up to father's—I almost thought of borrowing Sidney's evening clothes for you; but you wouldn't have liked that?"

Jerry's eyes fell. "No," he said, coldly, "I shouldn't have liked that."

"You men are so funny," Georgia commented, incidentally. "Well, I got Sidney to tell me where you can rent a suit. He wrote it on the back of his card. It's down on Monroe Street, and if you show them the card it will be all right. The suit is five dollars—isn't it lucky I happened not to pay the meat bill, so I have the five dollars left? You must hurry or it will be too late."

She said all this in a brisk, rattling, business-like way. Going to the chiffonier, she took her purse from the top drawer and came back holding a crumpled bank-note and Bane's card in her hand.

As soon as she had mentioned Bane a horrible disgust of the party overcame Jerry. He saw himself dangling irrelevantly, wandering uselessly, awkward, blundering, alien, miserable, covertly stared at, whispered about, in a rented suit.

"Why, I don't see how I can possibly go, Georgia," he began, lamely. "I've some work that absolutely must be done to-night—something very

important." He regretted again that he had not told her fully about *The New Era*, and that he had put forth a pretence instead of the real reason for his reluctance to go to the party. "And I know nobody there, anyhow," he added; "they don't care to see me."

"You know me, Jerry," Georgia replied, gently; "I'd care to see you."

He plucked up a little courage, seeing how well she took it. "But you can see me right here," he suggested, lightly. "Can't you—go with some one else?"

Georgia had not lived with him six months without finding out that she could coax him into anything; but she wished too eagerly to go; her nerves were strung too tensely to the wish; his opposition struck upon them irritatingly, and at the crisis suddenly, fatally, her woman's wisdom failed her—she lost her temper.

She lifted her head and looked down at him in a way that made him feel anew what a thorough-bred she was. "And have them say my husband wasn't presentable?" she demanded.

Her shot went wide of the mark—such was Jerry's hopelessly plebeian nature. He merely grinned. "That would be about the truth, wouldn't it?" he asked, sweetly; "and you know it wouldn't make the least difference to me what they thought."

"Do you never intend going anywhere?" she asked, sharply.

"Oh, I don't object to it on principle, if that's what you mean," he answered, coolly. Unreason-

ably, blindly, pitifully, her anger was beginning to kindle anger in him. "We may go next time."

"I guess there won't be any next time if we don't accept this invitation," she flashed back scornfully. "It's the first one, you'll remember, and we've waited six months for it."

"I haven't waited six months for it," he returned promptly. "Thank God, I've had something better to do the last six months than wait for anybody's invitation to a dance."

"What, for instance?" Her dark eyes swept him with a challenge. Her incisive voice summoned him pitilessly to an accounting.

He knew well enough that she spoke in anger, in mere thoughtless petulance; but the bitter words seemed to blow out the atmosphere of love and trust in which they had lived like a cold blast through a warm room. It cut to his heart; a flush came to his face. What could he say for himself; what achievement could he point to—this bumptious young fellow who had promised himself that he would do so many fine things? Laboriously grinding out special articles at five dollars a column—or nothing; picking up little crumbs of correspondence; doing his valueless, petty newspaper work—was that something to brag about as being better than waiting for an invitation? It was his wife that demanded an answer. For an awful moment he felt himself grow little and futile as before her scornfully pointed finger. He had no answer.

Georgia regretted the words before she had uttered them. The anger in her forced them out.

Now that she had spoken, she would not retract. She went to the window and sat down, her face turned away from him. Jerry held his place sullenly. In the pause that followed each of them felt a squalid wretchedness in the situation.

Suddenly there came back to Georgia a longing to go; a desire that instantly swept up to a crisis in which it seemed that she absolutely must go. Her body drooped forward; she clasped her hands over her knee, and when she turned her face towards him it was with a look, a pose that made her seem pathetically little and soft and helpless.

"You know it's only a little while that I can go anywhere, Jerry," she said, gravely.

Jerry looked up at her from under his brows. He knew then that he must yield; to resist that appeal would be sheer brutality. Manlike he yielded grudgingly and regretfully. He arose and sighed. "We'll go," he said; "where's the money."

Georgia got up and silently handed him the bank-note and Bane's card. She had won; but there was no pleasure in it for her. The joyous anticipation in which she had thought of the party had escaped. Jerry folded the bill and note together in a little roll which he held in his hand as he turned to the door.

"But dinner's all ready; you'd best eat before you go," said Georgia.

"Never mind," Jerry answered, not looking back. He stepped out. His foot was on the stair when the door burst open behind him. He looked around stolidly. Georgia was running towards him.

"Come back !" she commanded.

Rather wonderingly, still in a kind of sullen defensiveness, he stepped back. Georgia plucked the card and bill from his hand.

"Do you think I'll go with you if you're going to act that way about it ?" she cried.

"I'm ready to go, but I'm not going to pretend that I like it," he replied.

Georgia tossed the money on the sideboard. "Better eat your dinner," she said, in a low voice, scarcely parting her lips to say it, and she went into the bedroom, slamming the door behind her.

Jerry told himself that he was not bound to victimize himself to her caprice; that in offering to go he had done quite enough; he was ready to lie down, but he didn't propose to crawl. He stalked, frowning, into the kitchen. As he had expected, it was the sort of repast which Georgia compromised on when she was in a hurry or tired—it being one of the very many intervals between the going of one girl and the coming of another. The tea and baked potatoes were on the stove; the bread and cold meat on the table; the butter in the ice-box. As Jerry sat down he saw Georgia go through the dining-room with her hat on, and he heard her go out of the hall door. He smiled slightly and began eating very comfortably. After all, he had the evening for his interview. His mind ran back to it gladly; the zest for it came over him again; he was impatient to get the pen in his hand and begin writing.

XVIII

GEORGIA stepped down on the flagging and turned up the street aimlessly, a bubbling little volcano of wrath. Her one idea was to punish Jerry some way. She was perfectly sure that he had used her very badly indeed. Now that the thing was definitely settled, she felt again the lure of the dance—of the gay, bright, pleasant things she loved. She felt more keenly than ever that Jerry had wantonly deprived her of the happiness due her. She wished to make him suffer for it, too. For a moment she had a daring, rebellious idea of getting Bane to take her, but she instantly recoiled from that. Perhaps it was the recoil that prompted her to turn westward, opposite to the direction she would have taken if she had been going to her father's. She remembered that she would owe the Wilcoxes an apology, and she began inventing one as she walked along rapidly. She saw, without heeding, that she was getting in a poorer, rougher region, but she knew it was not far from home. As she crossed an intersecting street the sound of a quarrel came to her ears. Three men ran out of a shop and began scuffling and cursing at the curbing. Georgia stopped at the corner. The men were half a block away. She thought how scared Jerry would

be if he could see her down there after dark, and for a moment she had a sense of rebellious pleasure as she paused, deliberately, impudently, and watched the men. One of the men broke away and ran towards her, followed by the others. She seized her skirts in one hand and ran. At the other side of the block she glanced back. The men were in the middle of the street, quarrelling and scuffling. She walked hastily for another block and looked back again. The men had disappeared. She leaned against the fence-post at the corner, panting. In a moment, as her breath came back, she began laughing. It seemed very ridiculous. Jerry came back to her mind. Her anger had disappeared. She thought Jerry had not behaved very well, indeed she thought he had behaved very badly, and she still wished him to feel a becoming regret for it. But she was no longer angry. She remembered the many things he was unselfish about, and how hard he worked. She would have gone back at once and made it up with him; only she saw plainly that it would not do to encourage him, to give him the idea that he had done right. She compromised, therefore, by dropping in at a neighbor's for half an hour.

When she went in Jerry was deep in his interview. After waiting an hour she went to bed, not angry at all, but rather sad and subtly rebuffed because the willingness in her to forgive, to love, had not been expended.

It was midnight when Jerry went to bed. Georgia was lying on her side, her cheek resting on her

hand. It struck him again how pretty and dependent she was. He felt a need to tell her that he was sorry; that he wished with all his heart to make her happy. But he thought she was asleep and he forbore to disturb her. Besides, he was tired to death. As he stepped to the dining-room to turn out the gas he thought she stirred slightly; but when he looked back she was lying as before. Far off in the night, millions of miles away, in a drowsy, dim, isolated place, it seemed to him that a hand stole up to his cheek caressingly; but he was too far gone in sleep to think about it.

The interview with the judge fell far short of creating the sensation which Jerry had imagined for it in his most buoyant moments; but it was not the total eclipse his fears foretold in moments of overwrought dejection. *The Daily Organ* made it the subject of a leading editorial, and *The Clarion* noticed it in a paragraph. Neither paper felt free to abuse the judge, so they took it out on *The New Era*, but Jerry did not mind that. The point was, they noticed it. Dillingham found half a dozen boys, whom he stationed at busy corners down town to cry the paper, and Freddie Hess evangelized for it at an unremunerative percentage on the west side. Altogether three hundred copies were sold, and Dillingham's ancient hand-press creaked in the unwonted labor of an extra edition. Bashford's philanthropic broker was quite taken with the interview and the show of increasing business. He readily agreed to advance \$500, his enthusiasm carrying him to the point of making the interest only two per

cent. a month instead of the five he usually exacted. They thought of moving the establishment to more fitting quarters, and of buying a new press. A big hope opened to Jerry; as for Dillingham he became a locomotory chuckle.

To a far greater extent than he had thought of, Jerry took up his intellectual abode in *The New Era*. When he was not writing something for it he was considering whether something he had written could not have been improved. He fell upon the literature of economics remorselessly, wasting the night digging into reports and essays. The altruistic and utilitarian motives were crudely blended without his being distinctly aware of any incongruity in it. He expected to enrich mankind, but the picture always completed itself in his mind with a rather large laurel wreath for Mr. Drew. He did not dream of becoming rich. He did not wish that egoistic condition for himself any more than he condoned it in others; but he did dream of winning a secure place, of having his say, of making the fluid mass about him feel his individuality. He had his half-hours of higher and purer enthusiasm, when to hurl statistics at the plutocracy was its own exceeding great reward; when he would have devoted himself to penury and oblivion in his work with a martyr's joy—only he remembered Georgia, and he recognized the impossibility of devoting her to that kind of martyrdom. He went a certain length in that direction, however. He finally told her as well as he could about *The New Era*, and when it came to his wish to give up some of the special articles, which

after all boiled the pot so ineffectually, she agreed with an instant generosity that shamed him.

Georgia tried honestly for a couple of weeks to be interested in it for her own account. She read the two columns of *The New Era* that Jerry wrote with the best intention to find it admirable; but she could not conceal from herself that it was uphill work. What he accomplished was necessarily measured for her by the amount of money he brought home at the end of the week. Her idea of the future was that he should make more money. She was perfectly willing that he should do any kind of work he wished, but she could not conceive of any reasonable or even sane scheme for the future of two young people living on \$1800 a year which did not include more money. She had faith in his ability to make more, and she practised the economies that the narrowness of their income enforced, good-naturedly, even merrily, accepting them as part of a probationary period in which one must do the best one could without grumbling, even if the best fell short of the new cloak that she absolutely needed to look respectable. She had long since detected in Jerry a tendency to become absorbed in his own merely personal things—the things he did of evenings in his room; to cut himself off from the reasonable enjoyments of life. She did him the credit to think he scarcely realized how this tendency was cutting her off, too; how lightly he was setting aside her claims to his time. She thought his eyes ought to be opened to his mistake. In this spirit she went with Bane to some afternoon concerts. In this

spirit, finally, she went with Bane to the Charity Ball.

When the invitation came she had resolved not to repeat the mistake of the Wilcox invitation four weeks previous. She got up from the dinner-table, as though she had forgotten it, and brought the square of card-board and the envelope. She watched the little welt come between Jerry's eyes as he read.

"Shall we go?" she asked, her head a little to one side as though she were giving a conundrum.

Jerry paused a moment to consider how pretty she was. It seemed brutal to deny her anything when her hair was done in that becoming way on top of her head. He came back to the subject with a sigh. "Are you well enough?" he asked, gravely.

Georgia could not keep back a mischievous smile, knowing well enough that he did not intend to go and knowing what she intended. "Oh, I'm well enough," she replied, cheerfully, "if you wish to go."

Jerry laughed at the imputation. "Would you really like it?" he asked.

"Why—I dare say I would—I usually do when I get there," Georgia answered, smiling. For a moment, quite illogically, she feared he would offer to go and spoil her plan, the object of which was to bring him into a going frame of mind.

Jerry glanced down at the invitation again. "We can scarcely afford it, can we?" he said.

"No, I suppose we can't," she answered, with a readiness which surprised and gratified him.

Impelled by the gratitude, he said, "But you might go."

"Yes," said Georgia, readily, "I might go with papa and Sidney and the others."

"Why don't you?" Jerry asked.

"I suppose I might," she repeated thoughtfully, and in a moment, without anything more being said, each of them recognized it as settled.

As soon as it was decided and Georgia had her way she began trying not to regret it. She hoped it would not be a grief to him that she was going without him, although she wished him to dislike it so much that he would go himself next time. Womanlike, as soon as she had prepared the medicine and administered it she began pitying him for having to take it. Even amid the dear ecstasy of contemplating the new ball dress which she had contrived to find the money for and to get done so cheaply, she stopped with a small, chilling shock of fear and doubt, thinking how Jerry would be grubbing away in his den while she was dancing. She wondered, painfully, whether in his heart he would blame her. The inevitable effect of it was that she was fonder, more loving towards him than ever. She told him about the new dress, dwelling on the cheapness; but he listened with an apparent indifference which she partly resented, partly feared. Otherwise the subject of the dance was not mentioned between them. Each of them instinctively shunned it; but, unspoken, it was in their minds a good deal. At dinner-time, the evening of the ball, they sat under the nervous sense of a painful situation approaching its climax. They were an uncommonly silent pair. Jerry ate steadily, his

eyes on his plate. Georgia nibbled here and there, and now and then stole a quick glance at him.

"I hope you'll enjoy yourself, dear," Jerry said at length, when he felt silence to be worse than speech.

"I won't!" Georgia burst out impetuously in reply.

Jerry had his doubts. Nevertheless the words comforted him. "Why in the world are you going, then?" he asked, good-naturedly.

"I don't wish to give up going altogether," Georgia replied, with a touch of indignation.

They subtly felt the situation verging towards that sordid, miserable ground they had come to on the occasion of the Wilcoxes' dance. Both had grieved over that quarrel enough to be prepared against a threat of its recurrence.

"Oh, well, wait until I get *The New Era* going fairly and we'll be ready for dances," Jerry hastened to say, with an affectation of cheerfulness.

"I thought dances would be done away with then," said Georgia. "I don't see how you can have dances without capital."

"That's because you have the commercialized point of view," said Jerry. "You don't need capital for dances; you need only music and legs."

The little vein of talk seemed to be exhausted, and they lapsed into the troubled silence that had preceded it.

When Georgia got up to remove the dinner-things Jerry was staring grimly into his coffee-cup. She stopped, with a certain helplessness, and laid her

hand on his head. "I think you're a dear boy to let me go," she said, in a murmur.

For a moment he was overpoweringly sensible of a sweet fulness of reconciliation; but in another moment it seemed rather the sweetness of a farewell, and when he had gone into his den the obsession of unhappiness that had been hovering about him all day came down upon him. He kept himself there by main force through the earlier part of the evening; but when his straining ears caught the rustling sounds of her dressing, he could endure it no more. He got up and went into the dining-room, foolishly, aimlessly. A light came through the partly open bedroom door; but when he stepped towards it Georgia called out:

"No, sir; you're not to see me until I'm all ready!" Adding, as he advanced, "Now, Jerry!" in such a tone of mingled indignation and entreaty that he could only laugh and turn back.

The mere sound of her voice reassured, comforted him. He went back to his room and waited. By and by, without any warning of footsteps, the door swung open and Georgia stood on the threshold, composed, her hands lightly clasped before her, as though she were standing for a picture, her eyes shining, her lips parted in a smile in which there was a touch of self-consciousness as though she entreated his admiration. Her dress was pale yellow, closely moulded to the full, pretty lines of her bust and hips, but having a flowing effect obtained through lace and the width of the skirt. He saw, almost first of all, that it had been cut about the

neck with a cunning regard for his rustic notions, which yielded the point without losing any of the pretty effect of the smooth, bare white neck. He was grateful for the concession. Her note, as she stood looking half shyly at him, was at once piquant, triumphant, and tender, as though she revealed joy in her own grace and beauty as something especially on his account, something especially belonging to him.

He praised the dress, as he saw that she expected him to do, and the wearer.

"I think it's a pretty good dress myself," said Georgia, complacently, lightly returning to a more commonplace mood, now that the trial was over. She stuck out her toe and looked down the folds of the skirt at it. "And it cost only thirty-seven dollars—you bear that in mind, Jeremiah."

"The dress is all right," Jerry replied. He posed her again and stepped back to admire. "You just stand that way and you'll fetch 'em."

"But there's nobody to fetch ; that's the sad part of it," she protested.

"Maybe you'll find somebody," he said, jokingly.

"Maybe," she said, tantalizingly, as she patted down a plait in the skirt.

They heard the sound of wheels in front. Then the door-bell jangled noisily in the kitchen. Jerry caught his breath, and Georgia glanced up at him quickly.

"It must be Sidney; you go down," she said.

Bane, distinguished in evening dress, and in his usual complacent manner, was waiting on the steps

as Jerry opened the door. Georgia had disappeared in the bedroom when they got up-stairs, and Jerry had an awkward, painful five minutes trying to be polite. When Georgia came out with her wrap Bane jumped up and turned towards her, smiling, ready. "What ever made you so punctual?" he demanded.

"Oh, the prospect of going with you, of course!" Georgia answered, jokingly. "How do you like my dress?"

"It's great. How do you like my clothes?" Bane replied, laughing at her.

"I like your rose," Georgia replied, not minding him, and, taking the lapel of his coat as though the garment were quite separate from him, she bent her head and smelt the flower.

As had happened before the evidence of their intimacy, the easy familiarity between his wife and Bane jarred harshly upon Jerry. He knew this fellow was her relative, had been with her almost as a brother from childhood. Still— He looked at them standing together, alike in their festival attire, alike in their common ground of experience, of acquaintances, of environment. His own coat was shiny at the seams; the bag at the knees of his trousers seemed suddenly more protuberant. He stepped somewhat back into the shadow.

"Well, come on; let's on with the dance," said Georgia, gayly. "Good-bye, Jerry; don't think of sitting up for me. Now I've started, there's no telling when I'll be home."

She said this last more to Bane, but at the door she turned and threw a bright glance back at her

husband. The door closed after them. Jerry heard their steps on the stairs ; their voices, Georgia's rising merrily. The front door closed with a jar. The carriage-wheels ground over the pavement.

He knew well enough that the jealousy burning in his heart was weak and foolish, even that it was low and cowardly. Yet in his life before and after there were few moments so tensely tragic as that wherein he stood, breathless, and heard his wife driving away with Bane. The sound of the wheels had not died away before a panic of remorse seized him ; it seemed to him that something irreparable had happened ; it seemed incredible, impossible that he should have let her go.

Georgia had looked forward to the moment of going with misgivings. Mrs. Walker's words came back to her ominously. Something in her heart warned her. Half a dozen times she had repented of her purpose and been almost at the point of foregoing it. But the moment she was seated in the carriage beside Bane what had in the forecast seemed hazardous, doubtful, became quite commonplace and harmless. After all, it was only Sidney ! His familiar presence reassured her. Pleasant anticipations of the dance began coming to her ; zest for going, for being admired, for finding herself in brilliant company and beautiful surroundings, enticed her mind. Once at the ball, she was doubly reassured. Her friends were about her ; she was in an atmosphere of approval ; everything had the sanction of authority. She felt herself quite at ease—and the dance was delightful. Her buoyant youth re-

sponded completely to the gayety about her. It was after four o'clock when she got home. She had been thinking of Jerry half the way; but her attitude had completely changed. She no longer felt doubtful, half afraid, and apologetical towards him. That was quite impossible. Now she had merely a sense of gratitude towards him for the great pleasure which he had, in a way, made possible for her, and a kind of fond sympathy for him because he had not enjoyed it, too. Bane waited on the step until she was safely inside and had called down a merry good-night.

Georgia stepped into the dining-room and paused. The gas was turned low and the room was empty. She tiptoed to the bedroom door and peered in. Jerry was snugly in bed. The trepidation and unhappiness she had felt at going came back to her mind, and she could not repress a little laugh—all that seemed so utterly unreasonable now, so perfectly unnecessary. What she had done was so simple, so commonplace, so perfectly proper, and Jerry, instead of feeling badly about it, had gone sensibly off to bed.

She could not know that ten minutes before he had been pacing crazily through the rooms, looking at the clock every two minutes, his mind full of wild things that he felt to be irremediably damning. He had fought them off, thrust them out, sometimes aghast at himself that his heart could conceive them. He had pretended that he was anxious lest some accident had befallen her; lest there had been a panic at the ball, a runaway, a highway

robbery. In his excited, overwrought, ungovernable mood any of these things seemed possible. Yet he knew it was not really a fear of them that oppressed him. It was the thought that she was away, out of his sight, out of his reach, in an atmosphere he profoundly distrusted — with Bane, who had been her lover. It was only by the exercise of an unsubmerged remnant of his will that he restrained the insane impulse to go out on the streets, aimlessly, in search of her.

At length, peering from a dark front window, he saw the lights of the carriage as it turned into Marlborough Place. The lights seemed a gleam of reason in the demoniacal limbo he had been living and writhing in since one o'clock. In pure shame at his weakness he flung off his clothes and jumped into bed. As he lay listening to her light, quick steps, to the rustlings of her dress, he loathed himself for the things that had been in his mind. He felt them make him unclean, low, vile. Yet he could not speak to her.

XIX

SIDNEY BANE went home from the dance very well content. He meant no harm in the world to Georgia; he meant only good. But he conceived her good to consist in being relieved as much as possible from her husband. He was unselfishly glad remembering how happy she had been.

Next morning, over a late breakfast, Judge House said, reminiscently, smiling a little at the recollection of it, "I guess the girl enjoyed herself."

"Yes," said Bane; "she has the knack of getting a good time—when she has the chance."

The judge gave a little sigh. "She doesn't complain," he said. "I admire her pluck—or I would if it wasn't so pathetic."

By-and-by he said, with an inference perfectly understood by Bane: "He seems to be keeping up pretty well. I guess he isn't an unintelligent fellow."

"No, I reckon there's nothing the matter with his head," Bane said, shortly.

"He's rather bright," the judge owned; and, after a moment's reflection, he added, "damn him."

Bane went down to his office, where he had not been for several days; but the work he had in

mind did not progress satisfactorily. He discovered himself several times within an hour lounging back in his chair and smiling at nothing. He was thinking of the ball—that is, of how gay and pretty Georgia had been. Bane did not conceive of himself otherwise than as her friend and helper. He did not think of her husband otherwise than as her weak betrayer and undoer.

While Bane was contemning him, Jerry was coming out of *The Evening Call* office for the early lunch which he allowed himself fifteen minutes for. His way lay along Fifth Avenue and through the alley between Washington and Madison streets. It was a little after eleven o'clock, but electric lights were burning in most of the offices. The rigorous cold of the last week was yielding dismally, humidly. The air had the feel which one associates with a damp, cold blanket. The sullen mists overhead, just higher than the cornice of the Security Building, seemed to be raining a kind of sappy malediction, impalpable to the eye or ear, but of which other subtler senses took shivering note. The flagging was covered half an inch thick with a nasty paste into which the feet fell with reluctance.

On this unpropitious morning *The Daily News* was apparently holding a strange levee. Two rows of men and boys, one along the outer edge of the flagging, one along the inner, stretched for a quarter of a block. At the mouth of the alley the crowd was denser, spreading out into the street on the one hand and into the narrow alley on the other. Most of the men were poorly dressed.

Here and there one was ragged and shivering from the penetrating chill of the moist air. Jerry had seen the same thing daily since fall. He knew the men were waiting for the noon edition of the newspaper in order to get the first chance at the "Help Wanted" advertisements. As he turned into the alley he saw, with a quick touch of surprise and pity, three girls standing close against the corner of the building. The taller of the three stood a little in front of the others. Her right hand was bare, and in it she held ready two pennies. In her left hand she held the wool mitten for the right and a flat purse whose imitation snake-skin had long since lost its shabby pretence of being other than stamped paper. A little blue cloth cap was pulled down over her dark hair, which was cut short, and worn in a wavy brush somehow suggestive of the stage. She had fine eyes and comely features, and she returned Jerry's quick, compassionate glance with a slight heightening of color and an angry flash from her eyes. The two other girls kept behind her, peering out with a kind of anxious timidity.

A string of newsboys laden with papers damp from the presses came bounding and tumbling from the rear door of the building. Some scampered east, their cries in a moment sounding along La Salle Street. Others came west, and as they emerged from the alley the men rushed at them, fell upon them, holding out coins and reaching for the papers. Every ragged urchin was in a moment the centre of a ring of eager hands, offering pen-

nies and snatching at papers. As soon as a man got a paper he pushed out of the crowd, impatiently flinging aside the news sheets, and began scanning the pages filled with small, solid type headed "Male Help Wanted." In a moment numbers of them were hurrying up or down the street to apply for the positions offered, going mostly alone, but now and then in groups of three or four, one holding the paper, the others peering over his shoulder, their fingers pointed at the column that interested them.

The girl at the corner held out her pennies, calling, excitedly, "Here, boy! Here, boy!" But the first half-dozen youngsters sped by without noticing her. Then Jerry caught one by the shoulder and swung him up in front of her. The boy swore volubly, tossed two papers, snatched the pennies, and ran on, swearing. The girl glanced at Jerry. Again her big eyes flashed indignation, as though she were saying to him, "I'll have you know its none of your business that we're out of work and driven to come down here and struggle with the men for the first papers." Then she put the papers under her arm, and, with her two companions, hurried away.

Jerry laughed a little at her indignation; but not long. He wondered if it were part of the divine, immutable scheme of things that a fine girl like her, having all the priceless potentialities of loving, of motherhood, should be held so cheaply that she had to come down into the streets and fight like a dog over a bone for the bare chance to live.

Half-way up the alley, opposite the dingy entrance to a cellar that had above the dirty and broken stairs a number of signs, such as "Red Hots, 3 cents"; "Coffee, 2 cents," Jerry met a newsboy returning in the austere tow of a big policeman. Under one arm the boy clutched half a dozen muddy, crumpled papers. He was whimpering. His free hand, doubled into a small, grimy fist, was busy at his eyes. The urchin was like a hundred others who peopled the alley daily—undersized, dirty, clad in cast-off garments, shrewd-faced. A tousled cap, degenerated into a mere mop, covered his uncombed head. There was no vest or jacket under his baggy overcoat. Trousers too long for him were turned up at the bottom. The burly policeman carried a rawhide whip instead of the usual club. He walked after the boy, and now and then gave the stubby little legs a switch with the rawhide—not viciously or with enough force to cut through the enveloping trousers, but by way of wholesome reminder. The boy was crying, but without any noise, as though he instinctively appreciated that his trouble was not to be obtruded upon the sanctified bustle of business about him—the whir of the presses, the rattle of wagons, the clang of the street-car gongs.

"I'll give y' gad dang good reason to remimber it; yi can bet yer life on that," the big, uniformed representative of society was saying to the culprit as Jerry passed them. He did not stop to ask questions. He could guess the story well enough—a quarrel between two newsboys; a fight, as he

guessed from the mud-stained papers, representing the boy's whole stock in trade—his entire capital, probably; then retribution in the shape of the policeman.

A thought flashed through Jerry's mind and made a chill at the pit of his stomach. To Georgia and him a child was coming; perhaps a boy. What if in the unknowable chance of things that boy should come to this alley; be tossed into this Christ-forgotten pit to struggle with its baby strength as these boys did, to be often cold, hungry, forlorn; to be whipped by a big policeman.

Suddenly, as though by the shifting of a scene, he saw some things in a new way. He no longer wondered that men strove for money. It seemed wonderful to him, rather, that they preserved any semblance of honor, of generosity, of kindness in their strife for it; that they did not rush out like wolves, pillaging and killing to get the counters that would insure their own against the misery and shame of poverty.

He began thinking what he could do to make money. He had thought of it a number of times since his marriage. He told himself that with all the fakes and tricks there were going and making money, such a fellow as he was should be able to think up a fake or trick that would make money too. He assured himself that he would not mind its being dishonorable or dishonest if it were profitable and within the law. Probably in a certain mood he would not have cared. But as soon as he began thinking of particular ways and means he

merely groped. Held off in the abstract, the thing seemed very easy ; brought into the concrete, it was impossible. In the end he always gave it up helplessly and came back to his work. Notwithstanding these occasional fits of greed, and although he thought of money and its effects in a general way a good deal, he thought of money as applied to himself very little. His work absorbed him. He had a belief that some way or other he was going to have more money by-and-by. In the end, he came back to *The New Era*, to his big, luminous, vague, socialistic projects.

Georgia neither helped nor hindered with the work, and he expected neither of her. Bane was with her frequently. Jerry hated Bane, and he acknowledged it freely to himself now. Often he would not have had an economic Eden arranged by William Morris and Bellamy unless somehow Bane could first be cast out along with capital, wages, Carnegie, Pullman, and the other egoistic serpents. To him Bane was typical of the things he hated, abstractly and concretely—in the latter way, because he felt that the difference between rich and poor was identical with the whole matter that was marring his life with Georgia. He felt that it was being marred without his having the power to help it. Sometimes the trouble was overcome, drowned out by the mere flow of youth in them ; they spent a Sunday afternoon in the park or an evening at the theatre gayly, happily almost as when they were lovers. Again, Jerry found Bane's flowers in her rooms, or Georgia gone away,

and he gnawed his heart over it and plunged sullenly into whatever task he had on hand. Sometimes, rarely, he rose above the strife in him; set himself at work calmly, steadily, ready to do what he could and take what came. At the worst there was no visible quarrel between them.

March came in, bleak and stormy. Georgia went out but little. Jerry, coming home, usually found her lying on the lounge, pale and weary-looking. Often he felt very sorry for her. Sometimes of an evening he dropped the economic treatises, speeches, reports he was always delving into, or the things for *The New Era* he was always planning or doing, and talked with her or read to her, taking up his work after she fell asleep. Another evening the work would not suffer itself to be put by.

"Don't go, Jerry," she said, one such evening, stretching out her hand to detain him as he rose.

"I must," he said, hastily, "I've so much to do."

She looked up into his face as she lay—so singular, so inscrutable a look that something moved him to sit down again.

"Are you sorry you married me?" she asked, in a quiet, impersonal way, her fingers running over the lace of her handkerchief on which her eyes were fixed.

"Why, certainly not," he replied, with a touch of indignation.

"I'm afraid I've been a disappointment to you," she went on, as though he had not disclaimed it. She looked up at him lovingly. The sweetness of her tone and look cloyed his heart. He stooped forward and caught her hands and kissed them.

"My dear girl," he said, "if I could make you happy, doing my best, I would have nothing to complain of."

For the space of a few seconds a perfect atmosphere of peace, of joy, of security enveloped them.

A ring came at the door. The girl Georgia had got slipped through the room, her eyes downcast, and they knew at once she had been watching them from the dark hall leading to the kitchen and listening to them. Instantly the precious and delicious sense that had sprung up in their hearts was stricken down. The self-consciousness they had for a moment escaped rolled back on them embarrassingly. They remembered, not the words of love each had spoken, but the girl listening in the hall, and they felt awkward, half ashamed.

"It must be the doctor," said Georgia, listening to the step on the stair; and in a moment Dr. Dilk came in. He was a short, heavy man, with neatly trimmed whiskers, and a tiny wart on the side of his nose which had an unfortunate effect of magnifying that large feature. His manner was brisk and eminently comfortable.

"Ah, Mr. Drew, is the patient's temper normal to-day? It was in a bad way last time I was here, if I remember." He shook hands briskly with Jerry while he beamed good-naturedly at Georgia, and as soon as that perfunctory ceremony was over he sat down at the head of the lounge while Jerry retired to a corner, under that singular sense of being an alien and an interloper, which all of Georgia's friends somehow managed to put him under.

"You spoiled my temper by being ridiculous," said Georgia.

"I told Mrs. Drew," said the doctor, looking around at Jerry, "that she ought to take a drive every day—and I see you haven't done it," he went on, looking back at Georgia.

"Driving is expensive," said she.

"So are doctors, my dear young lady," said Dr. Dilk, promptly, "particularly when they're coming to see sickly babies."

Jerry felt himself accused of an incredible meanness. "You'd best take the drive if the doctor recommends it," he said.

"We can't afford it, Jerry," she replied, with a simple frankness which was much harder for him to bear than an equivocation would have been.

As soon as the doctor had gone he brought up the subject again, urging her to go.

"It would cost three dollars a day," she replied, "and you know we can't afford that. I go every few days anyhow, and Sidney will take me oftener if I let him know I like to go. It doesn't cost him anything."

"My God," Jerry thought, "must I be beholden to that beast for the very health of my wife and child?"

"Only twice a week," Bane had said to himself, as one plays miser with his joys—"twice a week—Tuesdays and Fridays, say."

On Thursday he was thinking, "To-morrow will be Friday." The first pleasant, gentle rain of April was falling. Looking out through a broad window

of the Union Club, Bane fancied he could see the dull grass in Washington Square brighten and vivify. "To-morrow will be Friday," he thought, and he turned, smiling, as some one called him.

Friday was one of those days when spring seems to have stolen in unnoticed, to be discovered suddenly in full possession. The still lake twinkled and invited under the bright sun; birds were piping incessantly.

"Never mind the carriage, William," said Bane to the man at the stable; "I'll take the cart."

"Suppose I'd better hitch up Bess if you're goin' to drive," said the man, grinning, for Bane's disinclination to horsemanship was a joke with him.

"Oh yes, Bess," said Bane, with an effect of gayety.

He watched the sleek, docile, intelligent animal as the man threw on the harness. Usually he took no interest in horses; but to-day he admired the mare's glossy coat, her strong, handsome limbs, her intelligent eyes; he felt a kind of love for her as though she were somehow in his secret. The sense was so strong upon him that he went up and patted her nose and stroked her flank, to the groom's astonishment.

It was not of itself either a very big or a very dark secret. It consisted simply of the thought that in a few minutes Georgia would be sitting close beside him; that they would be alone, moving swiftly, pleasantly over the freshened roads through the bright air. He did not think beyond that nor behind it.

It struck him that Georgia looked a little surprised, a little dismayed as she saw that he had the cart instead of the carriage. When he gave her his hand to help her in he noticed that she leaned on it heavily and that she got into the vehicle slowly, carefully, almost laboriously, not with the free, quick, graceful motions common to her. Her dress had changed from the trim chic effect which she usually managed to contrive in all her gowns to something looser, more voluminous. He had noted that before; but, without especially thinking about it, had associated it in his mind with the prolonged indisposition from which, as he understood in a vague way, she was suffering. She was distinctly paler to-day. He saw that she leaned forward away from the jogging back of the seat; that she frequently put her handkerchief to her lips, which otherwise were parted, as though she did not breathe freely. In a little while she asked him to take her home. Concerned, apprehensive, he handed her out in front of her door. He saw that she was quite ill.

"I'm afraid the ride hasn't been a success," he said, solicitously. He was standing on the stone carriage step, she on the walk below him.

"You must bring the carriage next time, Sidney," she said. "I don't like the cart."

The use of his name, something singularly gentle in the tone, arrested him; he looked down at her, into her eyes, and in an instant he knew something he had not suspected before.

"Yes, of course," he said, hastily, and, spring-

ing into the cart, he drove rapidly away in a kind of panic of shame and anger. What he had learned stung every sensitive surface in him. He thought loathingly of Jerry, and even Georgia suffered in his thoughts, as though he had found her out in something low, disgusting. That passed, however, and though he still shrank from his discovery as involving something cheapening, vulgarizing of her, he felt an immense pity for her. It was part of the jumble in his mind that he got a sense of self-approbation from his resolve to be more loyal to her than ever, more steadfast in her cause ; that he actually liked himself the better because his fondness and compassion for her flowed on unceasingly.

“Poor girl,” he thought—“poor little girl. My God ! A child !”

Next time he saw her, which was the following week, it was with new eyes. The old sprightly, independent, adorable, cruel Georgia, the nymph, the delicious, maddening, inaccessible, virginal creature was gone. In her place was a gentle, beautiful, unfortunate woman. The mermaid had been caught and brutally chained ; she was cast before him bounden, songless, her mystery dispelled, her divinity gone ; but so human, so helpless that he could have lain at her feet. He felt an immense compassion for her—so sincere that his schooling stood him in good stead in keeping it from translating itself in look, tone, or act. He knew well enough on what terms he could have her company, and he was careful.

After the drive he stepped inside and walked up

the stairs with her. She ascended slowly, helping herself by the railing. Almost at the top she faltered an instant. Simply, naturally, spontaneously, as though she had been a tired child, Bane put his arm behind her and helped her up. They went up a couple of steps slowly, both laughing at the oddity of it.

The door at the head of the stairs opened and Jerry stepped out. Without an instant's hesitation or any embarrassment, Georgia, still laughing, stretched up her hand to him.

"I guess two can get me up," she said, laughing, as Jerry took her hand and helped her. "Altogether now," she said to Bane, who had paused.

But Jerry's face was not inviting, and Bane excused himself.

Inside, Georgia dropped on the first chair, still laughing a little. "My," she panted, "we'll have to get an elevator, Jerry, or a derrick."

"Won't Bane do?" said Jerry. There was anger in his voice, his eyes.

Georgia drooped forward in her chair, her hand in her lap, and stared up at him.

"Why, Jerry," she said—a simple note of utter surprise. Suddenly she began laughing. "That's too absurd," she said. She was thinking of what Mrs. Walker had said. For a moment it again seemed quite preposterous that Jerry should be jealous of Bane.

Jerry knew well enough that he had done a weak, childish thing. He was regretting it when Georgia began laughing. Then he turned on his heel de-

liberately and looked at her. She ceased laughing. He picked up his paper and went into his room and shut the door.

Georgia felt indignant. At the same time, curiously, the certainty that Jerry was jealous gave her a not unpleasant sense of power over him. She felt no particular apprehension about it, because, Bane being the other man, it could not be a very serious thing. She felt, however, that her dignity required she should not go driving with Bane any more.

Monday she wrote him a note that she was not well enough to go that week. Tuesday she was lying down when Jerry came in, and she took care, in the dexterous way only a woman could find, to let him know what she was depriving herself of, notwithstanding the doctor's orders, because of his absurdity and selfishness. She expected he would be moved by remorse, would beg her to forgive him and to go with Bane as often as she got the chance. On the contrary, ignoring Bane altogether, he tried to persuade her to take a conveyance from the livery-stable. When she held out unwaveringly against this, he dropped the subject.

Georgia felt this to be most cruel and selfish and unreasonable. She resented it; then rebelled against it. There was not the basis for a conscious martyrdom in her; her disposition was too happy. From telling herself that she had a right to go, anyhow, that in a way it was her duty to go, she easily came to believe that it was a trivial matter; that Jerry had gotten over his pique, or would get over

it ; that he would not really care if she went. It was so hard to stay cooped up in the house. The next week she did not write to Bane, half hoping Jerry would come around. And when Bane drove up Tuesday, she went with him. As in the case of the ball, once the thing was done it seemed so simple, so innocent, so matter of course, that it must be all right. It was so pleasant to go. She went twice a week, as before, and Jerry's flash of jealousy became a half-unreal, half-forgotten, unimportant thing to her.

Walking home through the park one afternoon Jerry saw them in the carriage. The elegance of the equipage insulted him. A pang, brutish, ungovernable, poisonous, pierced through him. For an instant he swore that she should never go again. Then the sense of a sort of inevitableness, inexorableness in the thing crushed him down, as though a stolid-eyed heathen god, who was yet a real God, sitting aloft somewhere, had said to him : "Your wife may be false to you ; she may even betake herself to the devil altogether ; but you can do nothing about it ; it is not in your province to do anything. These little incidents befall out of your sphere."

XX

THE hot weather came on in the middle of June, and Georgia was very wretched bodily. She and Jerry had planned to go down to Tampico when he had his vacation the last of July. He was to stay a couple of weeks, but she could remain two or three weeks longer.

Georgia had her misgivings respecting Tampico. She imagined a stupid, intrusive little inland town, a tiresome, curious-eyed, critical old woman, a hot little bedroom under the sun-baked roof. It seemed to be a point of pride with Jerry to take her there, and she forbore to object.

One stifling afternoon near the 1st of July Jerry found her lying down, racked with headache, worn and ill.

"My poor girl," he cried, sitting down beside her and taking her hand compassionately. "Say," he said, struck by an idea, "why don't you go down to Tampico right now? Mother 'll be glad to see you, and it's cool and shady there."

Georgia raised herself on her elbow, her thin, pale face peering at him in quite tragic intensity. "Jerry," she said, "papa has invited me to go up to Broad Lake with him." She stopped, looking earnestly at him.

Two pictures came before her—the hot attic bedroom, the mean, dull, dusty little town ; and Broad Lake, the great, cool, beautiful stretches of the water, the rocks, the inviting, soothing verdure. It suddenly seemed to her quite clear and certain that she should die unless she went there. Tears of mere weakness and physical wretchedness came into her eyes.

“You dear girl,” said Jerry, compassionately, putting his arm around her. “Of course you shall go. It was very good of him.” For a moment, before the moving sight of his wife’s suffering, he really felt grateful to the judge. The moment passed. “That is, if you’d like to go,” he added.

Georgia shut her eyes. “It would be like going straight to heaven,” she said. She laughed a little, weakly, at her own extravagance. “But you don’t know how beautiful and restful it is there,” she said, defending herself with a touch of coquetry, “and how miserable the heat and the bricks and the smoke and noise here make me feel.”

There was silence for a moment. Then she said : “And of course you’ll come up next month.”

Jerry had not the heart to tell her that he could not—or would not.

When he did tell her it was in a letter. He took much pains in writing it—hinting at difficulties and embarrassments, ending by many circumlocutions with the announcement that it seemed best he should not come.

Bane brought her the letter from the cottage and handed it to her as she sat in the stern of the little

skiff. The wan, sick look had entirely left her face; her cheeks had filled out; her flesh was firm and white again. The circles had disappeared from under her eyes. The trip to the lake had been an immense success so far as her physical well-being was concerned. The skiff had been rigged with a high-backed, air-cushioned seat in the stern, so that she could ride comfortably. She leaned back luxuriously and read the letter, while Bane rowed with long, lazy strokes. When she reached the conclusion, she expressed neither regret nor surprise. As a matter of fact, she felt neither. Both she and Jerry had felt in their hearts that his coming to join her was only a fiction between them. Indeed, Georgia had been distinctly aware that it might involve some embarrassments. The judge had been solicitous, thoughtful, fairly gallant towards her in a way that had touched and pleased her. She wished nothing to happen that would be painful to him. The corner of the lake was settled mostly by a summer colony of their own neighbors and friends. Georgia saw that in the inevitable intimacy and informality her odd domestic situation could not be maintained so easily as in the city, where nobody knew what anybody did after they turned the first corner. She could not be Jerry's wife in one act and the judge's daughter in the next without exciting comment where the whole audience was behind the scenes and could see her making the changes.

Bane turned the boat into a little bay. They slipped through the mirror-like water close to the

shady bank. A sturdy umbrageous growth of oak and hemlock rose from the water's edge, and here and there a huge pine reared its straight trunk and spreading top high above the younger generations of trees. In the deep shade the sandy, pebbled bottom of the lake could be seen. Shoals of little fishes darted away friskily. Across the little bay the timber had been cleared away, and a broad, level pasture rolled back from the low shore. In the shade cattle were feeding; the hollow notes of their bells came across, agreeably suggestive of indolence, of peace.

Georgia felt neither surprise nor regret. She dropped her hand over the side, and let the water run through her fingers. Surely it was good to be there; surely the things before her eyes, the sweet, still air coming to her nostrils, were good. It was only for a little while, anyway. She did not think this in distinct form. She was too deeply content to think anything. But she had a sense, a feeling, that all around it was just as well that Jerry wasn't coming.

"Jerry writes that he can't come up next week," she said to Bane, simply, trailing her hand in the water and looking dreamily across at the cattle. "I'm disappointed," she added, superficially.

Bane had been furtively eying the letter in her lap as he rowed. "Ah," he said, vaguely. But he straightened up in his seat and plied the oars with a more vigorous stroke, as though he had suddenly discovered a kind of pleasure in rowing.

"Ah" was about as far as he ever went when

she spoke to him about Jerry—especially about Jerry and her father, as she sometimes did.

“I wish he’d come,” she said, absolutely not minding whether it were true or false. “If papa knew Jerry better he wouldn’t feel towards him as he does, and if Jerry knew papa he wouldn’t feel as he does. Men are stubborn beasts, aren’t they?” she added, absently. “Stop!”

She bent her head towards the water, breathless, commanding silence. Down in the still, shadowy water, beneath a jutting root, she saw an elongated patch of living shade—an eye that seemed to regard her. Bane dropped his oars to arrest the boat. As they touched the water the shade stirred, there was a dark flash through the water, and the fish was gone.

“You scared it away,” she said, regretfully. For a moment she peered into the water. “It’s gone,” she said; “no matter; let’s row up to the pond-lilies.”

She was in a languorous, drowsy, inconsequential mood—the mood in which one would purr. She lived then wholly on the surface; the stream of things flowed to her still, waveless, serene. She was deeply content. She grasped at nothing, sought to avoid nothing.

Bane rowed with slow, easy strokes, glancing at her now and then. He was at his best in respect of her, asking nothing, wholly considerate of her. Her bodily helplessness helped him to a fine, generous, sympathetic gallantry. Some confidences came up in her mood as naturally as bubbles in

quiet water. Bane took them discreetly, never in return seeking to obtrude himself.

"I think I must be a sort of animal," she said, suddenly, one evening.

She was sitting on the edge of the low porch of the cottage. Before them the still surface of the lake shone in the dark. Across, the thick mass of bordering trees rose mysteriously. A huge pine in front of the cottage held up its lofty branches against the starry sky. The coolness of the water came up to them. Over in the dark a choir of frogs grated the air, and the atmosphere was full of the damp, lulling smells of night.

"Undoubtedly," said Bane, who was lounging in the hammock above her. The glow of his cigar made a tiny point of human energy in the immensity of quiescent nature. "We're all sorts of animals, you know."

"I hope I'm not the sort you are," she retorted, with a show of indignation.

"Let that pass," said Bane, "and go on telling me what sort you think you are."

She was silent for a minute, and Bane, like a wise man, waited patiently for the unsaid speech to effervesce and force its way out.

"I ought to be awf'ly glad I'm going back home," she said, by-and-by. "I've been away seven weeks. I ought to be awf'ly glad"—she thought a moment—"and I am glad—only—well, it's so real in Chicago, you know; so brutally real. This isn't real at all; it's a lovely fairy story. You couldn't run street-cars and build sky-scrapers and have rough

granite pavement in this air — they'd simply melt away. And I guess we like unreal best, don't we? We don't like cooking dinner and being bothered with the rent and the washwoman. We like the beautiful far-away nowhere. And this is that. So I'm glad to go back on Jerry's account, only—"

Bane finished his cigar, smoking very slowly, waiting for her to say only what. Instead of saying it, she observed that it was getting damp, and went inside.

The summer passed differently with Jerry.

The afternoon of the Fourth of July he sat in his room, bombarded by the insane clatter of fire-crackers in the street. He was trying to write, but the writing would not go. Dimly the notion of a wasted festival annoyed him, and the emptiness of the familiar rooms haunted him. The things in them wore a funereal aspect, appreciable not only to his eye, but to a subtler sense. He dropped his pen and went down to the street. A middle-aged neighbor was industriously touching off big crackers under a pan for the amusement of his three small children. Just as Jerry stepped out of the door a cracker exploded with a roar, the pan sailed into the air, the man and the children yelled "Hey!" in unison, and the man flung up his hand and stuck out one pudgy leg with a grotesque effect of introducing the show to the youngsters. The children squealed gleefully. The man saw Jerry and, instead of being ashamed, merely laughed and nodded good-naturedly, and wiped the perspiration from his bald brow, and prepared to fire another cracker. The

man's pretty young wife sat in the front window and looked on approvingly. Jerry walked on, subtly offended by all of them.

He wished to do something festive; to be gay, happy, he did not care where or how. He remembered that there was a labor union's celebration at Stein's Park, and he started for that. Flags fluttering from the roofs lent a holiday effect to the street, and in front of every house a group of children or older persons made their explosive contributions to the general din. At the barns where the electric cars started the six corners were thronged. Girls in white dresses with sashes of bright-colored ribbon gave the distinctive note to the throng; but there were people of all ages—youngsters and gray-beards and easily identified family groups, the juvenile members of which were bundled and hustled into the cars with cries, pushes, and other encouragements. As soon as a car came up a human swarm fell upon it, filling it to overflow. Jerry got a standing place on the rear platform. The swift car rushed in a moment up a long suburban street lined with wooden shops, many of them with "false fronts," after the manner of a frontier town. Presently vacant spaces appeared between the shops, and here and there down an intersecting street a stretch of bare prairie could be seen. Signs on vacant lots and over the shops apprised the passengers that they were going through villages once having a distinct life, but now merged in the huge outspreading metropolis. The car stopped at last before a broad, low building of new unpainted wood.

1

The street ended there, and long, vacant expanses of prairie, with patches of wood, lay about.

Evergreen sprigs had been tacked over the front of the low building in a rude attempt at festivity; but the big tin beer signs were rather more conspicuous. To the left of the building stretched a tall, tight board fence, also new, and there was a big gate a little way down surmounted by a pine arch carelessly draped with red, white, and blue bunting. Jerry went with the crowd over the broad platform in the direction of the gate. Passing the saloon door, he heard his name called, and a reaching hand plucked at his sleeve. As soon as he had somewhat freed himself from the pack about him he saw little Williams grinning up at him, and he had no sooner identified Williams than O'Hara stuck out a thick hand.

Little Williams Jerry had known as a reporter having a kind of incredible brightness like that of a baby who talks at six months. His self-control and ability to reckon consequences were also infantile. At twenty he was experimenting with absinthe rather systematically, and every city editor had found out that he would not do. O'Hara was four or five years older, a dozen sizes bigger, and some degrees tougher. They were of the band that skirmishes on the outskirts of journalism—sometimes as far out as hanger-on to a police-court bailiff, sometimes as near to the sanctum as doing an assignment at space rates. Jerry went with them half carelessly, half willing; and he paid cheerfully for three of the four rounds of whiskey which were

ordered before he finally got out of the saloon and away from them.

He went down into the grove and through the inner gate into the park with the glow and lift of the strong liquor in his brain. He looked about him smilingly as he walked along. The park was a big stretch of natural wood, enclosed by a fence and cleared of underbrush. The grass was quite dead, and already the tramping feet had worn dusty paths from the gate to the pavilion, which was the centre of attraction. Various enterprises peculiar to popular outdoor festivities were set out under the trees, advertised by canvas signs and, more effectively, by loud-voiced criers and by mechanical organs. There were banks of dolls to throw balls at, canes and knives to toss rings at, swings, merry-go-rounds, pop-corn and lemonade booths, and wooden stands enclosed by rude rectangular bars where beer was sold. Girls in white dresses and bright ribbons still made the distinctive note of the crowd.

A band was playing in the pavilion and a crowd was dancing. The structure was open on all sides except for a wooden wall, perhaps four feet high. Young fellows and girls sat on this wall watching others dance. More of them stood in a thick wind-row all around the dancing-floor. Jerry walked around on the outside slowly. He noticed two or three girls who were quite pretty. They were fanning themselves and talking gayly with other girls or with young men. In both the men and the women it was evident by their clothes and appearance that they were working people, but the men showed

it most distinctly. Jerry felt a sudden pang of envy for them. They were enjoying themselves. One girl in particular he noticed. She had pink cheeks, light, short, curly hair, and a nose prominently bent in the middle. He stood still looking at her for a moment. She looked down. Their eyes met. Into hers came a subtle friendliness which he answered, half involuntarily, with a slight smile. The girl laughed and nodded at him as though she knew him. He went back to the entrance and pushed his way through until he came before her. She sat looking down at him from her perch on the wall, smiling a little doubtfully; but when he went up and spoke, she jumped down readily enough and took his arm. They began promenading with the others who were waiting for the dance to begin.

So far Jerry had acted quite thoughtlessly, merely following an impulse to be gay, to enjoy himself. He knew perfectly well that the whiskey was in his head; he believed he could almost measure the exact quality and quantity of its inspiration. He had an odd, secret sense of satisfaction in its influence, as they say a crazy man will sometimes secretly exult over the sinister thing he knows to be in his brain.

The waltz music began. They paused; the girl, with a quick liquid glance into his eyes, raised her hand to his shoulder, offering her waist to his arm. In that moment it came to Jerry that he had not gone in there without a definite intent lurking in his heart. The next moment he noticed that the girl's cheeks were touched with rouge; but it made

no difference to him then. He began dancing. His head felt hot and full. The future, with its interminable, inexorable coil of consequences, suddenly ceased to exist for him. He was capable of seeing nothing, of realizing nothing save the rosy instant in which he was living as he whirled around the floor.

The music ceased. The girl hung to his arm laughing and breathless. They went to the wall, and she stood close beside him fanning herself with her handkerchief. Her white neck was wet with perspiration, palpable to the eye as it wetted the edges of her hair; and her plump arm, covered only by a flimsy, transparent fabric, felt steamy as it touched his hand. A subtile glow came from her and added itself to his intoxication. The understanding between them was wordless; they said but little, and the little was haphazard, inconsequent. Another dance began. The air around them grew heavier, warmer with music and the moving limbs; a fine, almost impalpable dust arose from the swiftly trodden floor and became part of the atmosphere. A suffocating warmth came over Jerry. He could see the perspiration on the backs of his hands.

Suddenly the girl stopped fanning herself and leaned over the wall, looking out eagerly.

"Lord! look at the swells!" she cried.

A landau drawn by two sleek bay horses was going by in the road that skirted the park. It contained two men and two women. The women held up small, bright-colored parasols, and looked over the scene with a certain air of superiority. Jerry

knew they were not swells, but the girl was staring at them with breathless interest, eager, envious.

It came to Jerry strangely, swiftly, like the dropping of a curtain, that the difference between what she was and what she imagined those in the carriage to be was only the difference which he was trying to reconcile in his own life. Those in the carriage might be Georgia and her friends; he might be here envying them secretly, as this girl did openly. The girl's open admiration and envy of the sleek horses, the handsome carriage, the fine dresses, seemed suddenly to move Georgia far away from him—an ineffable distance. She seemed to be there in the rich carriage, he here in the dusty dance-hall; she glancing on with amused curiosity as at something out of her sphere from which she was forever secure, he staring at her over the unbridgeable space which divided them. The carriage rolled on; he could not reach her. The dance-hall revealed itself anew to him—cheap, dusty, low, stupid, himself a tramp, a beggar, half drunk. The girl leaned over to look after the carriage. Jerry slipped quickly away, going out the other side, and hurrying through the wood as though he feared she would run after him.

He came out in a crowded place, where there was on one side a miniature Ferris wheel, operated by a small engine and accompanied in its revolutions by a big barrel-organ that played "Sweet Marie" over and over. Near the wheel was a striking-machine. A tall, gaunt young fellow with a Swedish face was swinging the huge mallet. When he delivered his

blow the indicator shot up to the top of the post and rang the bell there. The young fellow picked up the mallet very gravely, quite unmoved by the applause, swung, and struck again. Again he scored the highest mark. A heavy-set, red-whiskered man, standing with his legs far apart, kept encouraging the striker and lauding his strength to the crowd as though it were his show. The young fellow went on gravely, unmoved, picking up the mallet, measuring the distance with his eye, swinging the heavy instrument, and striking. More people came up and stopped to admire the fine precision and force of the blows. Jerry kept looking at the Swede. He saw that he was partly drunk, and he wondered what freak of the brain could keep him there performing that heavy labor on a holiday. All at once he understood. This was the thing that man could do—he could strike, and he found his satisfaction in doing it.

Jerry went over to a bench and sat down, leaning forward, his forearms across his knees. The people kept streaming by—girls and fellows, and older men and women, and boys. Some of them glanced about gayly, as though inviting the pleasure they had come to seek. Others were evidently tired. Here and there a man or woman went by wearily, with a face drawn in a kind of mechanical smile, as though the purpose to be happy remained after sheer fatigue had overcome the ability to pursue it. The people looked at this thing or that for a moment; then dragged on heavily, still wishing to see it all, to be as happy as possible. It struck Jerry

that the holiday was a pathetic failure. Here were 30,000 people come out to enjoy themselves, and not one in fifty could do it.

He still felt a mist over his brain ; but all the exhilaration of the liquor had gone. The temporary self-oblivion, the power of merging naturally and happily in things immediately about him had gone, too. In its place was a sodden, bitter introspection. The mechanical, groaning strain of the barrel-organ became like the pursuing iteration of a sad thought.

“Who are you ?” he asked himself. “What have you done ? What can you show for the youth that is gliding away from you ? You were going to be a great editor, a powerful statesman, a famous publicist—how much nearer it are you now than you were five years ago back in Tampico ? That man over there, with the celluloid collar and string of blue tie and broad, grinning face, why isn’t he you and why aren’t you he ? Is there really any difference between you ? Where is your wife ?”

She came before him as when the carriage had passed, almost as in a physical presence, though somehow immensely remote, inaccessible. She was with her father—with Bane—Bane ! Bane !

Jerry got up and walked on, because he must move. In that moment all that he hated was centred in Bane. Bane was all that was smug, supercilious, rich ; all that insolently demanded for itself the best, everywhere, every time. To his bitter mind it seemed that Bane was taking his wife simply because he was rich, of the elect, just

as he would have taken the horse that suited him, not even thinking whether the man in overalls also wished that horse.

Jerry stopped in the dusty path and made a crazy vow that when Georgia came back Bane should never speak to her. In an instant he knew it for an insane thing; but he clung to it stubbornly. "I'll not have him in my life any more," he said to himself, with an oath, as he climbed on the electric car. "It is intolerable; it makes me wild; it would be better to kill him than to go on this way; it would be more manly."

A stout, middle-aged woman, wearing glasses, noticed the passenger beside her—a well built, comely young fellow, whose black hair straggled out under the rim of the straw hat which was set rather far back on his head. His dark eyes stared ahead with a kind of sodden fierceness; his lips moved as he muttered something to himself, and the lower lip protruded slightly as his mouth shut in a determined, ugly way. The woman detected a smell of liquor on his breath, and moved along in the seat nervously.

XXI

JERRY stood on the back porch, bathing his hot face and tangled nerves in the cold night wind. Below the gas-lamps lit a long stretch of dead, empty street. Across, at the opposite corner of the square, a little round window in the otherwise blank wall of a high flat-building looked over at him like an understanding eye. Behind the pane he could see the gas flame. It struck him as odd and rather mysterious. He heard the clatter of shod hoofs far down the street coming nearer, and he listened with helpless interest. He could tell by the break in the sound when the vehicle crossed the street-car tracks two blocks away. As the sound came near he leaned over the railing of the porch, his eye fixed on the street. A light buggy, driven rapidly, swayed by and rushed away. Jerry's eye followed it until it turned into another street. Then he looked back at the round window. He wondered whether somebody was sick or whether the girl had forgotten to shut off the gas. Across the alley the rear of a row of flats loomed in the dark. It struck Jerry as a sort of novel idea that there was a family, a household, a little nucleus of a world, behind each set of black windows. He was thinking of this, rather thickly, when he heard a step crossing

the kitchen floor. The door behind him opened. A middle-aged, matronly woman in a dress with narrow blue and white stripes stood in the parallelogram of light smiling down at him in a motherly, comfortable way.

"Mrs. Drew wants you to come in again and look at the baby before she goes to sleep," she said.

Jerry turned quickly and entered the lighted kitchen. A kettle was steaming on the gas-stove. A washbowl and some clothes and vials were in the sink, and the room gave other evidence of use unusual to the hour—for the little round clock on the corner shelf showed half-past two. Jerry tiptoed carefully through the dining-room. Dr. Dilk stood by the table in his shirt-sleeves, putting on his cuffs leisurely. Jerry went on into the front bedroom. The gas was turned low. Georgia lay in bed, her face white as the pillow. She opened her eyes and smiled feebly at him as he came in. Across the foot of the bed, under a soft, new pink blanket scarcely larger than a napkin, he saw the indistinct outlines of a little form. He approached the bed softly, stooped, and took hold of a corner of the blanket.

"That end's his feet, goose," said Georgia.

"How's a fellow to know?" Jerry grumbled.

"Doesn't he need a pillow?"

"Look and see," said Georgia; "but don't let the light shine in his eyes."

Thus admonished, Jerry knelt beside the bed, lifting the end of the blanket and peering under. A tiny baby lay curled on the bed, its face turned

towards him. Its little tightly clinched hands rested on its breast with an air of comical belligerence, and rose and fell with its short, regular breathing. The short, rapid inspirations; the swelling of the little chest; the tightly shut eyes, and something different from sleep in the deep repose of the little red face instantly reminded Jerry of a very young puppy as it lays sleeping. He looked up at Georgia, full of interest in the discovery.

"He breathes exactly like a puppy," he said.

"He does not," Georgia retorted, with feeble indignation. "He breathes just like a dear little baby—just like our little baby."

The pronoun struck him through with a new sense of it. The baby had been a mere unimportant incident to him. He looked down at it again with sudden awe, and it came to him as a revelation that this small, helpless, breathing thing on the bed was a little life given into his care miraculously. He went around and knelt by Georgia's side of the bed, holding her hand between both his and looking into her eyes. She smiled up at him and put her arm over his neck.

"Our baby, dear," she whispered.

"Yes," said Jerry, "our baby."

The doctor stepped into the doorway. He had his overcoat on. His hat was in one hand; his bag in the other. "Mrs. Drew must go to sleep now," he said, peremptorily.

Jerry jumped up in a sudden panic and hastened into the dining-room, where the doctor was giving the nurse some final directions.

“ You—you are going now, doctor?” Jerry asked, almost reproachfully.

“ Yes,” said Dr. Dilk ; “ Mrs. Blume knows what to do.”

But Jerry, not reassured, followed the doctor into the hall. “ Do you think,” he began, earnestly—“ are you quite sure that everything is all right ?”

Dr. Dilk laughed with the ease of a man to whom new babies are everyday affairs. “ Everything is all right,” he said ; “ go to bed.”

Georgia had already fallen asleep when Jerry stepped back. He became aware of an aching sensation at the back of his knees, as though he had walked a long distance, and of a heaviness and stinging at his eyes. He crept to the cot in the back bedroom, and was soon asleep.

It proved a very remarkable baby, eating and sleeping and waking just like a live person, as Georgia declared, triumphantly. Jerry held it in his arms rather wonderingly, marvelling at its perfect similitude to human life, as though it were a miraculous and exceedingly precious kind of toy. The awkward, aimless, galvanic motions of its little limbs were wonderful to him. He felt a little disappointed, secretly, at its general lack of purpose and imperfect perception ; but he supposed that to be a failing of its age. It grew apace, and got whiter and shapelier and altogether more presentable. One afternoon it lay in Jerry’s arms, and Jerry was crooning a nursery rhyme, as he had heard Georgia do, only crudely and unmelodiously. He glanced down at the round white face on his arm and was

startled. For the baby was looking, not vaguely and staringly, but intently, at him—the round blue eyes shone with intelligence and with seraphic innocence.

“Georgia,” Jerry called in a hushed voice, “see here ; he’s looking at me.”

Georgia only laughed at him. She took the baby’s fat cheek playfully between her thumb and forefinger, and said : “Court ee ook at ee papa. Ee dot silly kind of papa not to know ee tan ook at anysing ee wants to. Ee ittol angel !”

Then she dropped on her knees, caught the baby in her arms, and smothered him with kisses with a kind of fierce, insatiable tenderness.

Nevertheless Jerry knew that unaware to them a little brain, a little soul had waked within that soft, helpless mite of humanity, and it was a miracle scarcely less awe inspiring than the first. Looking down into those round, steady, seraphic eyes that looked back at him so wonderingly, he questioned himself as to what the child should ask of him and what he should answer. He felt quite humble and a little afraid.

It was only a few weeks that the child throve. From somewhere under heaven an ill wind blew upon it, and for days and nights they had the anxious sorrow of seeing the sweet baby plumpness of its flesh waste, of hearing its constant, plaintive cry. The restless little hands, pathetically wrinkled, like those of an old person, moved and clutched as though searching for the hand to lift them out of their pain. Sometimes the little

fellow lay exhausted with a low incessant moan, so heartbreaking in its note of helpless suffering that Georgia would cuddle against Jerry as though to be shielded from it, and sob. Jerry himself could easily have cried, only that in the bottom of his heart burned a kind of slow sullen fire of resistance, of rebellion, as though he were engaged in a personal struggle for the baby's life and would not yield.

Georgia was a wonder to him. It was as though she had suddenly lost herself, utterly forgotten herself. Through sleepless nights and weary days she seemed never to have a thought save for the baby or for him. The trial had suddenly exalted her womanhood high above all petulance, frivolity, thoughtlessness, to a pinnacle of self-denial and devotion unguessed of by her husband. Yet she, too, seemed infinitely pathetic to him in her helplessness and inexperience.

The child's moaning, garrulous cry drifted in to Jerry through the mazes of his sleep. He roused himself and raised up in bed. The baby was crying in the other room and Georgia was crooning to it with infinite love and pity.

"Poor ittol dearie, tan't ee get to seep? What tan 'is mamme do to make ee comfortable?" So the mother's voice ran on in foolish baby-talk words which the tenderness and patience of the tone exalted above the most beautiful language. Now she sat down rocking the child and singing a lullaby. Then Jerry heard the soft fall of her bare feet on the carpet as she walked back and

forth. He went out and found her carrying the baby up and down, crooning to it with dear, caressing diminutives. The child's cry was sinking in a low, murmurous plaint. As Jerry advanced Georgia motioned to him to keep still. She carried the baby up to him and held it out, inviting him with her eyes to pity it.

"He's going to sleep now," she whispered; "you go to bed."

"Let me carry him," Jerry whispered.

Georgia shook her head. "It would rouse him," she whispered back. "You go to bed, dear. If he doesn't sleep I'll call you by-and-by—poor little darling. Just see his little hands, Jerry." With ineffable tenderness and compassion she lifted a wrinkled little hand, putting it to her lips so gently as not to disturb the child.

Georgia looked pale and tired. Her eyes were heavy, and two fine lines over the corners of her mouth seemed to have grown heavier, as though a limner's pencil had been drawn over them. As Jerry looked down at her he saw her changed into a woman, offering her repose, her health, her life every moment unquestioningly, unreservedly for the tender little thing she loved. The man felt himself mean and patchy and brutal beside her. He waited a moment, wishing to relieve her, but not knowing how; then slunk off to bed.

Jerry felt that the tragedy of the child's sickness was lifting both of them to a higher quality. He saw it every moment in Georgia; and for himself, the suffering he endured purified and intensified him.

He could think of Bane now without a touch of the brutal jealousy and hatred he had allowed to come into his heart—could think of him generously. He could have taken Bane's hand and thanked him for his kindness to Georgia. He could have looked into Georgia's eyes and told her truly that he was glad she had been able to find recreation, pleasure in the things that were opened to her through Bane's friendliness. He felt himself in a clear, serene place, a place of intense suffering, but one where nothing mean, degrading came. He found little time to do anything for *The New Era*; but he turned to the ideal of which that work was an attempted expression with greater fervency, with a higher and less selfish inspiration.

XXII

DR. DILK was a radiator of sedate cheer. When he came in briskly and said, at once, "I've found a wet-nurse for you," Jerry and Georgia both felt for a moment that the finding of a wet-nurse was all that was needed. The moment passed and doubts came back.

"And do you think, doctor, the change will help him?" Georgia asked, anxiously.

"No doubt about it," said the doctor, briskly—"no doubt about it. Of course, whether that in itself will be all that is needed, you know, I can't say—can't tell till we try. But we must get the nurse at any rate."

Georgia glanced up at Jerry. He looked quickly away. He knew what was in her mind, and he shrank together under a sense of irremediable abasement.

"Will it be very expensive, doctor?" Georgia asked, gently.

It seemed unspeakably shameful to Jerry, and yet he knew the brutal necessity.

"Not expensive at all," said the doctor. "The woman's husband is dead. She is quite dependent. I heard of her through the church mission. Luckily nobody had put her up to the idea of going out

as a wet-nurse, so she didn't have her notions 'way up. You ought to go and see her immediately, though—this afternoon."

It was soon decided that Jerry should find the woman, and bring her back by any means short of actual abduction.

Georgia went to the head of the stairs with him, when he started.

"And, oh, Jerry! If the nurse should make him well again—" She leaned towards her husband, her straining soul shining through her eyes.

"Dear girl! Maybe it will. We'll hope so," said Jerry. Instinctively he hastened away from the precious hope in her eyes.

The address that Dr. Dilk had given him was over near the north branch of the river, and the street-car left him at the intersection of three streets. Of the six corners four were occupied by saloons. The day was cold and clear. There had been a heavy fall of snow, and in that locality the only clearing was done by the street-car companies and the sun. Huge windrows of snow, degraded, befouled, rose like filthy breastworks along the gutters. On the sidewalks the flakes had been pressed and crunched by passing feet into a repulsive compound like frozen sand. As soon as Jerry left the street on which the cars ran he encountered snow in masses and drifts, with only a narrow path close to the fences where people had walked. The houses were all small and of wood, and many of them were victims to mistaken attempts at ornamentation of

the sort colloquially called gingerbread. It was a poor street, but one which possessed a certain self-respect—a street in which the wayfarer found no brawls, but where the men sat behind the front windows in their shirt-sleeves.

A very forlorn, shabby little grocery stood at the end of the street next the railroad yards and bore the number Jerry was looking for. A door at one side promised to lead to the tenement in the low second story, but there was no bell. The untidy woman who sat by the stove in the grocery rocking a baby told Jerry to go right up. He felt his way up the dark and narrow stairs, and by that process found that patches in the wall were bare of plaster. There was a tiny hall at the head of the stairs, with three doors, as he made out, his eyes growing accustomed to the gloom. He selected the nearest door and rapped. The second door opened, and a mere infant in a tattered calico dress stood in the open way, looking up at him with impassive infantile curiosity. Its chubby, elfin, decidedly dirty features were slowly and uncertainly shaping themselves in a grin, in answer to Jerry's propitiatory smile, when a knotty old hand came out and pulled the infant back. A dark, seamed, rugged old face, with sparse gray hairs above it and a pair of deep twinkling eyes in the midst, was thrust out, regarding Jerry questioningly.

"Is Mrs. Jessop in?" Jerry asked.

The old woman, without answering, merely held the door a little wider, making way for him to enter. Without speaking she turned to an inner

room, throwing a curious glance at him over her shoulder as she disappeared.

Jerry found himself in the front room. The coarsely plastered ceiling sloped down at both sides. An old lounge, covered with faded green calico, stood against the wall. There was a patch of worn rag carpet in the middle of the floor. The room was clean, bare, not uncomfortable. Jerry was aware of a darker room behind him; more distinctly of peering infantile heads; then, very distinctly, of a concussion as of two soft, fleshy substances, followed by an infantile wail, swiftly smothered.

A tall young woman came out of the dimness and through the doorway, and stared for an instant, ill at ease, questioning, as Jerry turned.

"Mrs. Hickson, the matron at the mission, you know, sent me to you, Mrs. Jessop," said Jerry, not thinking it necessary to explain just how the message had reached him.

The young woman looked up at him with a kind of timidity. "Yes," she said, and sat down on the edge of a chair and began rolling her large, work-marred, wet hands in her apron. She was tall, full formed, with reddish hair and plain, honest features. Her coarse dress was unbuttoned and open at the neck, as from the heat of the kitchen, showing the beautiful, healthy whiteness of her breast.

"We want you to come and save our baby," said Jerry, not knowing how to put it.

The woman's big hands went nervously over and

over. "Mrs. Hickson spoke to me about your coming," she said. After an instant's troubled silence she got up and went to the doorway and called, "Mother!"

The seamy old woman came in, with a comfortable air of self-possession, giving Jerry another keen glance from her twinkling black eyes.

"The gentleman's come to get me to nurse the baby," said the young woman, looking at the elder in a nervous, anxious way, from which the caller divined a difference between them on the subject.

The old woman sat down without haste.

"It rests with you, mother," said the daughter, appealingly.

The old woman gave her wrinkled head a tight little shake. "Nope," she said, with an air of comfortable certainty. "I couldn't keep the young un. I'm too nervous," she explained to Jerry, complacently. "It's a dreadful young un—and it might die on my hands any time."

"I think we can easily find a place where they will take care of your baby," said Jerry, understanding.

The mother watched the daughter stolidly.

"Seems like I couldn't do that—give my baby over to strangers," said the young woman, with no further evidence of feeling than a downcasting of her eyes and a lowering of her voice. "Sense my husband's dead, seems like it wouldn't be right for me to give up the care of the baby."

"She ought to make the company pay for it, but she ain't got spunk enough," the old woman explained to Jerry, with a touch of contempt.

Jerry looked at the daughter rather helplessly.

"The company was to blame," said the daughter; "he was a teamster for the United Foundries. They was to blame."

"She only got a hundred dollars and the doctor bill," said the mother, with a sniff.

"They took care of him when he was hurt," said the daughter, "and paid the funeral expenses, and they give me a hundred dollars beside, to settle. What could I do against a rich company like that? We had no money—not a cent. I took the hundred dollars—"

"You ought 'a' got five thousand," declared the mother; "the law allows it. You'd get it yet, too, if you had any spunk."

"But I signed the paper to settle," said the daughter to Jerry. "It wouldn't be right to go back of that. What could I do, anyway, fighting a rich company like that?"

"You could do a heap," said the other, with a show of exasperation. "Didn't the lawyers come here and tell you so?"

"I couldn't bear to go into court fighting over his death—as though I wanted to make money out of it."

"That ain't the way to look at it," the mother cried, and Jerry could see that the ground was familiar to both of them. "He'd want you to have the most money you could get. We need it bad enough."

"If I could earn this money, though, ma," the daughter began, appealingly.

But the old woman cut her short with a tight little shake of the head. "I couldn't keep the young un for you," she said. "I'm too nervous. Cow's milk wouldn't agree with it, maybe. He'll find a place where they'll take it and adopt it out—give it away."

A small, uncertain, whimpering cry came from the middle room. The young woman went in there and brought out a rosy, round-faced, hairless baby, and sat it on her knee. The baby nestled close to her body, blinking wonderingly with half-awake eyes, alternately whimpering and smiling.

"I'm in poor circumstances," said the young woman in her low tone, making it a simple statement of fact, "but I wouldn't give my baby away or neglect it for a million dollars."

The old woman sniffed and marched out of the room.

"Mother wants me to sue the company," said Mrs. Jessop. "I want to earn some money dreadfully—seems like I must—but I couldn't put the baby out among strangers; they might not be kind to it." She put her big reddened hand against the baby's cheek and inclined her head towards it slightly; then quickly straightened up and let her hand fall, as though a sense of propriety restrained her from caressing the child in the stranger's presence.

"Couldn't you come and bring the baby?" said Jerry, struck by an idea.

The woman's hands came together as by an involuntary motion, palm to palm.

"I'd be awfully glad to, sir," she said, fervently. "I'd come for five dollars a week ; for three, if I could bring the baby. And I could nurse 'em both ; I'm sure I could. Mrs. Hickson said I could, too ; but she said you wouldn't want my baby there."

"Mrs. Hickson was mistaken," said Jerry, rather indignantly. "Can you come now ?"

"I could in an hour," she said.

Jerry wrote down the address, and directions for finding it, and rose to go. The young woman went to the door with him, carrying the baby on her hip. Something seemed to trouble her.

"The street-cars run part way there, don't they?" she asked.

"Oh yes ; it's a good ways ; you'll have to take a car," said Jerry. Suddenly he understood, and put a coin in her hand.

"Thank you, sir," she said. "I'll come, sure."

As Jerry rode back in the car he kept thinking of Mrs. Jessop and her baby. He got a sense of strength and comfort out of the reflection that he could help her ; it somehow made his own helplessness seem much less. He felt less poor as he considered how much he could do for her. He saw that he was saving her from a thing her conscience revolted against—a lawsuit with the United Foundries on account of the death of her husband. He did not consider much whether it would really be best to save her from it. He only thought that he was stepping into her life with power and intelligence to aid her. He rejoiced that at length an atom in that mass of poverty he had brooded pity-

ingly over had been brought up into his reach in a way that gave him a chance to help it. It was like an opportunity to prove the faith he had been professing, and he seized it with the ardor of an untried convert. He liked himself better because his sympathy had gone out strongly and generously to the woman.

He hastened to tell Georgia of his good luck in securing the nurse as soon as he got in the house. He brought out the pathetic facts of the situation: her clinging to the point of principle, of sentiment, involved in her attitude respecting the lawsuit in spite of the sort of siege her mother laid to her—a siege the artillery of which was her want, her baby's necessity, her care for her mother.

"So she'll be here, with her baby, in about an hour," he said, in conclusion.

"With her baby!" Georgia cried. "Why, Jerry, we can't have her baby here! We've no place for it. You didn't tell her she could keep it here?" she demanded, in dismay.

"But what could she do?" Jerry replied. "Her mother wouldn't keep it. She can nurse them both."

"I don't want my baby nursing beside a baby like that!" Georgia cried, indignantly. "I don't see what you were thinking of."

Jerry repressed the words that came to his lips first. "But if she can stand it I guess we can," he said. "It's she that's doing the nursing, you know."

Georgia glanced around the room in helpless be-

wilderment, as though calling the very chairs to witness. "But I just can't have it here," she said. "What on earth could I do with it? We'll have to send her back."

"And Jerry," said the man, gently; "what will he do?"

Georgia sank into a chair. "Of course, he must have the milk," she said, hopelessly. "If you had managed differently. Well—we'll see what Dr. Dilk thinks."

Dr. Dilk, who came in to see how the errand had prospered, agreed with Georgia.

"You'll find it won't work at all," he said, discontentedly. "I've seen it tried. I don't know much about medicine, but I do know all about nurses, wet and dry. If those women have their own babies around they'll favor 'em to the prejudice of yours. Besides, it isn't one in a dozen that has milk enough for two."

The doctor said this as though he were accusing the class of highly reprehensible conduct, comparable to a weakness for stealing the spoons.

"I believe she can do justice to both," said Jerry. "Anyhow, it's the only way we can get her."

"Well, she can come, and we'll see what is best to be done afterwards," said the doctor.

When Jerry got home next day, Mrs. Jessop, holding her baby, and Georgia and Dr. Dilk were sitting in the dining-room. As soon as he entered, Mrs. Jessop glanced up at him in a scared, helpless sort of way, and Georgia and the doctor looked a little guilty.

"We were just trying to arrange with Mrs. Jessop to put her baby in the half-orphan asylum, where they would take the best of care of it," Georgia explained, with as good a face as possible, in answer to her husband's questioning look.

"Do you wish it?" Jerry asked Mrs. Jessop.

"No," she replied, promptly.

"I think we can arrange to keep it here," said Jerry, dryly. "We'll talk it over."

Mrs. Jessop got up and carried her baby out to the kitchen.

"We can't have it here, Jerry," Georgia began, irritably, as soon as the door had shut on the woman.

"You don't want it here," said Dr. Dilk, decisively. "You want her to give her attention to your baby."

"Can't she nurse them both?" Jerry asked.

"Oh, I suppose she could," said the doctor; "but that isn't it, exactly; you want your baby to have her attention, and that's what you pay her for."

"We don't pay her," said Jerry. He got up and walked across the room from the necessity of motion which he felt. "We don't pay her," he repeated. "Money can't pay her. That woman comes here to perform the most precious labor possible; to give our baby life out of her life. She gives us the fruit of her love, her maternity. It's monstrous to suppose we can buy that of her, taking advantage of her necessity, with no further obligation to her. She gives our baby life, and it's hellish to demand, for our mere convenience, that she also

take the life from her own baby, simply because we have a little more money than she has."

"You have a right to use your money for your child's advantage," said Dr. Dilk, rather testily.

"Even if that were so," said Jerry, "it has nothing to do with the case. She can give all that we require for our child and keep her own child, too. We propose to take a cruel advantage of her helplessness simply for our convenience, for our ease."

"For my convenience and ease," said Georgia, dryly. "It doesn't make any difference to you, for you are away all day."

"Would you wish to be parted from your child?" Jerry asked; "to hand it over to strangers, never seeing it, except perhaps for a few minutes at long intervals?"

"I wouldn't be," said Georgia, decidedly.

"You would if you could get no food any other way; if you were as helpless as this woman is and anybody insisted upon such inhuman conditions you would have to submit."

"You'd best get another nurse then," said Dr. Dilk, impatiently.

"And turn this one out?" said Jerry.

"Oh, if you wish to put it on eleemosynary grounds," said the doctor, sarcastically.

"I do," said Jerry.

Dr. Dilk fingered his eye-glass a moment, glancing out of the window. He was plainly annoyed.

"I'm afraid you don't quite realize the gravity of the case, Mr. Drew," he said, slowly. "The best conditions that you can get for your baby are none

too good now. You have no margin to throw away, no room to take chances in. And anything that worries the baby's mother is an element against him."

Jerry continued walking about. "Wouldn't anything that worried his nurse tell against him, too?" he asked.

"Oh, she won't worry," said the doctor, impatiently. "Women of that kind are too used to acquiescing. Just show a little firmness and she'll give up and get over it in a day."

Jerry paused before the doctor, looking down at him solemnly.

"We love our baby," he said; "it's killing us to see him suffer. How can we deny the force of parental love in another? We are awfully helpless, turning this way and that for aid. How can we refuse to aid another when it comes in your way? How can we endure to see our baby waste, die maybe, unless we rest in charity, sympathy? Can you tell me that it's your judgment as a professor of medicine that our baby's chance of recovery depends upon sending that other child away?"

"No, I can't tell you that," said the doctor. "No man could tell you that. When a little baby gets sick you can only do your best and trust to Providence; nobody can forecast or calculate with any accuracy. I can tell you that in my judgment it's best to send the other child away."

"We will keep it here," said Jerry. "I'd rather leave my baby in the hands of Providence while my own hands were not throwing out another's baby."

Georgia had listened to her husband with astonishment. It was seldom that he asserted himself, and she had long ago divined that Dr. Dilk came with that subtle air of authority, as from the world of society, of conventions, which somehow abashed Jerry and put him at a disadvantage. It had not occurred to her that Jerry would put himself squarely in opposition to the doctor. Now she started up with a little cry of dismay. "You don't know what you are doing!" she exclaimed, with a touch of passion. "The doctor says it would be best. I cannot let you do it—I will not!" Her eyes flashed at him in a burst of angry remonstrance; but as she encountered his glance, she instantly changed to entreaty. "Our darling little baby, Jerry; we mustn't think of anything besides him."

"Yes," said Jerry, "we must." He stepped beside her and took her hand. "You have been so brave, so generous—can't you understand another woman's feeling towards her baby? What the doctor says is only his guess; he admits it. Don't let us draw back from the simple test. It should be easy for you to trust in God; there is such courage and generosity in your heart; help me to do it."

As Jerry spoke he felt strangely exalted; he had a mystic, ineffably sweet sense of direct personal understanding with God, as though God were there in the room, and he stood before Him, unabashed, unafraid, only loyal, humble, obedient.

Georgia looked up at him, speechless, confounded for the moment. Dr. Dilk arose slowly and started for the door, walking thoughtfully. As he went

out he appeared all at once to recover his good-humor. "I hope you'll find the arrangement satisfactory," he said ; " maybe you will "—he sighed gently—" but I'm afraid you won't."

The baby died, far in a tortured night, a month later.

Georgia, holding the still, little form in her arms, looked up at her husband, her mouth drawn pitifully, her eyes startled, accusing.

"He's dead!" she wailed. "My baby's dead!"

It was an awful moment for Jerry. He felt that his wife accused him. He had seen that as soon as she gave up the point about getting rid of Mrs. Jessop's baby she abandoned herself in a mysterious, incombustible woman's way to a kind of blind, superstitious reliance upon his God. He knew that although she did not reason it out or formulate it in her mind, it was as though he had promised her that God, his friend, would save the baby, and she had relied upon the promise and now found herself cruelly deceived ; that it was as though he had offered her a rotten reed to lean upon while he stole away a more substantial support. He had been pained and baffled at finding that she mistook his fervent expression of a large faith for a totally new spiritual awakening in him, something like the ordinary one of "getting religion," and that she carefully arranged thereafter so that he could go to church twice on Sunday and to prayer-meeting Thursday evening, and that she seemed surprised and rather puzzled when he declined to avail himself of these opportunities.

Dr. Dilk had assured them both in the last two days, when it was evident to him that the baby was nearing its slow, cruel death, that it would have made no difference if Mrs. Jessop's baby had gone away. Jerry felt in those exquisitely sensitive surfaces which now seemed wincingly susceptible to the least accusatory thought that the point against him in the doctor's mind was that in a crucial moment he had been willing to hold to another consideration besides that of the good of his child; that he had clung to his sentiment or principle even when he was warned that it might be inimical to his baby; that with a suffering, dying babe in his arms he had been more or less than a simple father. Jerry felt too that as soon as his wife got around to a sane view this point would tell against him with her.

His conscience fully approved what he had done; yet he found no peace in that. The momentary exaltation, the infinitely sweet and peaceful sense of unity with something divine, everlasting, had quickly escaped him. The pitiful sight of the dying babe had speedily extinguished the self-approbation he felt in deciding to help Mrs. Jessop. Very strangely, although he believed he had done right, when he looked into the meagre face of his own boy, he felt himself guilty of a kind of nameless treason because he had considered humanity, charity, rather than, or as well as, the claims of this infant. He understood fully the passionate love of a mother, which would lead her to sacrifice not merely her life, but all human and divine obligations for the sake of her child.

"Your son-in-law is certainly a young man with theories," Dr. Dilk observed to Judge House, telling him of it soon after the funeral. "Not that any other nurse would have made the slightest difference, as it turned out."

Judge House took a long, hard breath; then smoked slowly and in silence. Bane got up and lounged over to the window, under an instinctive dread that they might somehow sense the anger and bitterness in him.

"It's worse than I thought of," he said; "a lunatic! Poor Georgia! Poor little girl!"

XXIII

GEORGIA knew that it would have made no difference if the Jessop baby had been sent away. She wished to be generous to Jerry. She tried to do justice to the goodness of his motive, little as she could understand it. And yet there was a hardness in her heart towards him against which she was pathetically helpless.

In the first pain and grief over the boy's loss it seemed to her as though in some monstrous, incredible way Jerry had shown himself ready to sacrifice it, to betray it, to cruelly cast off its feeble little hold of life. That the sacrifice of the child was to be made in behalf of a generous, even a noble, impulse did not help her. Nothing could avail against the thought that he had held up other considerations besides a care for the baby. She had seen him in the crisis stepping apart from her and her suffering child, standing on a ground she could not understand, and judging her and her child as only parts in a general scheme of things, rather than as the things before all others, besides which all others were not to be thought of.

She felt no anger towards him ; there was nothing resentful, vengeful, in her feelings ; it was simply that he had thrust her and the baby away from

him in the moment of their direst need. There was a hardness in her heart, something she could not define or control, like a tumorous growth under her tender flesh. Sometimes she felt an immense pity and tenderness for him. She would have been glad to comfort him, but she could not; he had put it out of her power.

This helpless sense of alienation from her husband accentuated the frightful emptiness of her life when it seemed that she could not go on at all without hearing the little voice, seeing the little face, feeling the little hands. She went to her father's often, and often slipped away from home without disturbing Jerry at his work.

Jerry felt her alienation from him in the very air of the shadowed house, in the pulses of his constricted heart. He grieved for her sorrow in addition to his own; he wished her to feel that he loved her, was devoted to her; but he misapprehended the quality of the feeling which held her aloof from him. He thought that she censured him; and he could see no way to a reconciliation which did not involve the repudiation of things he could not repudiate. He reimmersed himself in the incessant occupation out of which the baby's illness had largely drawn him. The views he held with regard to the situation of the poor suddenly became vital to him because he had sacrificed for them; because he had stood on them and acted on them. In the quickened and heightened interest which he took in pursuing the conclusions from these views he got the idea of personally investigating the condi-

tion of a typical group of workingmen. Partly because Mrs. Jessop's story gave him the clew and partly because they offered especial advantages for his purpose, he chose the workmen of the United Foundries.

The United Foundries was largely the handiwork of Eldridge Butler. Jerry had a very distinct impression of that gentleman—of a short, broad-shouldered, deep-chested man of sixty-five, having sparse gray hair neatly, almost foppishly combed, cool gray eyes, and a close-cropped mustache. Altogether, at first glance, he was a handsome, well-preserved man; at second glance one to consider thoughtfully. Structurally his head might have been designed for the purposes of a battering-ram. It was a large head, with big, strong bones, presenting an effect of squareness from the cheek bones down. The flesh rolled down a little over the outer halves of his eyelids, giving an appearance of pugnacity. In manner he was cool, polite, the type of self-reliance, as one who looks calmly out and considers whether it is worth his while to strike, not doubting the efficacy of the blow he can deliver.

Butler began life very humbly—at the bottom, in fact. He came on to Chicago in the late forties with a couple of hundred dollars, and soon had a line of drays which were beyond competition in the celerity and trustworthiness of their service. He added omnibuses to drays. From carrying hardware he took to selling it, and from selling it to making it. In 1885 the Butler foundries and others, comprising the most important manufactories of stoves and

heavy hardware in the country, were brought into a huge coalition. The coalition was first called the Foundry Trust. Later, after the passage of some anti-trust laws, its style was changed to the United Foundries Company—without in the least changing its character or functions. For some years the company paid diminishing dividends. Then the dividends stopped altogether. Next came a receivership, Butler being the receiver.

There was some grumbling. It was alleged that Butler and his colleagues had overstocked the market, and piled up an enormous, unsalable product, using the ore from their own mines. Other things were alleged, among them that Butler was short of the stock some 30,000 shares. On 'change the shares were quoted at 11 to 12 and heavy. Brokers advised their clients to let them alone.

"If the signs ever get right," they said, "Butler will pick up what stock he wants at a price that suits him. But you can bet your life the stove-making business is going to continue mighty bad until he gets that short line covered."

The Butler foundries were situate in a suburban place on the lake shore. The operatives lived in and about the same place. Jerry spent some time there, running down in the afternoon and coming home at night, broadened daily by intimate contact with the pitiless struggle for mere subsistence; hardened by it also in a sense of antagonism that took on a personal quality, with Butler for its object.

As spring came on the shares went up. On La

Salle Street the story was that Butler had covered his short line and bought out a number of large holdings. At the huge works, some towering smokestacks, long extinct, began making large contributions to the smoke nuisance. Vast, shed-like structures, through whose darkened and deserted spaces for two years only the solitary watchmen had paced, glowed with the infernal light of furnace, rang with the bedlam din of clanking hammers, screeching saws. Knowing ones on the street said the receivership would soon end. It was said the company was preparing to execute some large orders. Butler announced there would be no increase in wages until fall, the price at which the product was selling barely recouping the company at the existing wage scale. He represented the renewal of activity as having been undertaken mostly for the benefit of the idle hands.

Nevertheless, following the new life in the works came another revival, expressing itself secretly in well-guarded meetings by night, in close consultations wherever half a dozen workmen met, in brighter eyes and firmer steps of men rousing from lethargy. The promise of a full meal put heart in the men to fight.

The air was full of the talk of a strike. It inspired Jerry as a call to arms. He began a series of articles in *The New Era* on the United Foundries and its men. He showed the lawless character of the coalition, its great over-capitalization, the chicanery of its management, revealing as clearly and forcibly as he could the huge, cruel, conscience-

less game played by Butler and his associates for a stake of millions ; a game in which the happiness of ten thousand men, women, and children was directly involved—and made less account of by the players than the ponderous, whirling, noiseless balance-wheel of the big engine made of the dust motes that danced in its draught.

The New Era began looking up. The two boys whom Dillingham sent down to Butlerville sold 80 copies the first week, 150 the next, and 310 the next. A general merchandise store not far from the works, but independent of the pervading Butler influence, put in a small, experimental advertisement, being solicited thereto by Dillingham, who came in the modest incognito of an advertising agent rather than in the full majesty of publisher and editor-in-chief. A grocer thought of advertising, also, but withheld his decision ; and the advertising firm which Dillingham visited encouraged him to think it might get some patent-medicine business in a small way if the circulation kept on increasing.

“I figure,” said Dillingham, looking up from his desk with grave satisfaction—“I figure that with the grocery ‘ad’ in we’d be on a paying basis this minute. Yes, sir ; if it wasn’t for these bills and the \$500 Bashford borrowed from Frankel, and if the grocery ‘ad’ was in, I’d say she was on a rock-bottom, copper-riveted basis this minute.” He leaned back and looked at the figures on the pad with an air of surveying them critically. “If the circulation keeps on jumping up—which it will—and we have any luck with the advertising, we can see

our way out sure by another month. I dunno," he added, dubiously, after a moment, picking up a bundle of folded slips of paper; "I suppose it would 'a' been better if we'd hired our printing done and not bought that new press. All the city papers except the big dailies do hire their printing done. But it don't seem to me like a newspaper somehow unless you've got a printing-press. It costs us more to do our printing; but I figure that when we get the circulation we're aiming at it will cost us a blame sight less, and if we didn't begin with our own print-shop and keep enlarging it gradually as the paper grew, why it would be a terrible expense to set up a shop after we'd got grown. That's the way it looks to me." He glanced over at Jerry rather anxiously for confirmation of these views.

Jerry laughed. The queer, difficult little economics of the paper seemed mostly a joke to him. Nevertheless, he believed in the paper; he founded his hope on it. He was not able, like Dillingham, to get comfort out of calculations based on 5000 supposititious new subscribers. The thing that gave the paper verity to him, that made it real, solid, vital, was his own work in it. It mattered nothing to him that his articles on the United Foundries were indifferently printed and meagrely circulated. He put his heart and mind into them. They seemed good to him; they were the utterance of his protest; and in a way that he did not reason about it seemed to him that they would succeed. He thought it was probably inexpedient for them to do their own

printing, but when they had the 100,000 subscribers it would not matter. So he told Dillingham.

"That's so," said the editor. "Well, I hope Bashford will get around soon with that other advance from Frankel. These blamed bills foot up more than I thought. We need some money right away."

They were sitting in the new office of the paper over on Fifth Avenue. The office was in an old building—that is, one built twenty years before. There was no elevator, and you went up three broad flights of steps. The steps and walls were incrustated with dirt, but *The New Era* office at the end of the hall on the third floor had been whitewashed. There was clean matting on the floor, and two new desks and three new chairs, so that the effect was of brightness and cleanliness. Jerry still did his writing for the paper at home evenings; but he enjoyed dropping in when he had time. Bashford, also, came in frequently. Their relations with Dillingham were of the easiest character. Jerry wrote for the paper and Bashford got the philanthropic broker to advance \$300, then \$200, taking Dillingham's note, which Bashford signed, merely, he said, as a further evidence of the broker's good faith, since his signature was a kind of certificate of the note's worthlessness. There was no kind of bargain between them. Dillingham said they were friends of the court, and as such were entitled to hold the pawn-tickets, and Bashford replied that they should expect a share if there was ever anything to share except debts. The money Bashford got bought

some new type and made a payment on a new press. As soon as Bashford came in, Dillingham boarded him about the money.

"Hello, John," he called, as the trim, well-clad figure appeared in the opening door, "have you seen Frankel yet?"

"Yes," said Bashford, "I've seen him."

"What did he say?" asked Dillingham, eagerly.

"Well"—Bashford hesitated an instant—"he's going to lend me a thousand." He said it with an effect of reluctance.

"A thous—" Dillingham's eyes stuck out incredulously. His face opened slowly in a comprehensive grin. "Why, boys, she's a sure winner—a cinch!" he cried.

"I think the paper could pull through, anyhow," said Bashford.

Dillingham was on the up wave, and the difficulty appeared to him with the smallness of a difficulty passed. "Of course she'd pull through—no doubt about that," he said. "Still it's better to have the thousand. If these fellows should get ugly about their bills—but it doesn't make any difference now." He smiled broadly, and stretched out his big hand as though he grasped victory with it. "When shall I make out the note?"

"Oh, you needn't mind," said Bashford, easily. "The loan is to me personally, and I won't need any note."

Dillingham held out his big paw. "John, you're a brick," he said.

"All right, old man, don't forget it," said Bash-

ford. "A brick without straw, I guess," he added, with a little laugh, when Dillingham had gone out to air his exultation. He shoved the editor's chair over to the window, opposite Jerry, and sat down.

"Do you feel yourself coming to pieces?" Jerry asked, lightly.

"I feel myself the most useless thing in the world," said Bashford. He lifted his feet to the low ledge of the window and stared down the street.

Jerry did not take these things from Bashford very seriously, but he always felt called upon to deny them.

"Why?" he asked.

"Oh, give me the negative—ask me, Why not?" said Bashford.

"I know why not," said Jerry. "You're all right—only I suppose this afternoon you've been setting your heart on the moon, and you can't get it, and that has made you unhappy."

"No," said Bashford, deliberately; "I've been setting my heart on the sun, and I can get it, and that has made me unhappy."

"What's up, John?" Jerry asked, soberly.

Bashford did not answer. In a moment Jerry turned to his desk. When he looked up again, ten minutes later, Bashford had not moved. He still sat with his feet on the window-ledge, staring down the street, his hat tilted back a little. He made a very distinct picture for Jerry, from his tan shoes to his modish headgear.

XXIV

THE next day was the 28th of April. The probability of a strike at Butlerville was distinctly the feature of the day from a journalistic standpoint.

As Jerry hurried to his desk in *The Evening Call* office—being a little late on account of prolonged work the night before—Brinsley called to him. On the managing editor's desk lay the week's copy of *The New Era*, and Brinsley was scowling at it.

"Here's a good thing," he said, morosely. "Ever see this cheerful periodical?"

"Yes," said Jerry.

"Who is this lunatic Dillingham?"

"The editor of it."

"Well, he ought to be locked up," said Brinsley. "He's filling his miserable little dauby print with stuff that's plainly intended to stir up a strike among the United Foundries men. Good time for them to strike! They've been making half-time and quarter-time and no-time for two years, and now, the first chance they get to earn something, along comes this chap and some more like him to get them to strike. Of course, if they struck, Butler would simply get new men to fill their places. This ass Dillingham hasn't sense enough to see that, even if he does boom his circulation for a week or two by talk-

ing strike, the men won't have money to pay for *New Eras* any more than for bread and potatoes after they quit work. You can't pitch into the fool paper, because that would only advertise it, nor into the imbecile who writes this stuff," the managing editor continued while Jerry shifted his weight to the other foot, "because that would simply give him the notoriety he is working to get." He crumpled the paper, and threw it into the wastebasket with some force. "You write us an editorial, though; just say the talk of a strike is probably the work of some rattle-brained, self-seeking agitators who make a living that way, and that the real workmen will scarcely be so foolish as to throw away their first opportunity to earn something after two years of idleness. You've got to draw it mild, of course, but write something on that line."

Brinsley turned back to his desk, evidently in bad humor, not in a mood to be argued with. Jerry hesitated a moment; then went out.

"After all," he was thinking, "it's really he that is doing it; it's his editorial; I'm only the writing-machine that is turned on."

He sat down at his work and began writing. Midway in the article, as the words he felt to be lying and wicked came from under his pen, a revulsion seized him. He leaned back in his chair, and for the space of a minute he contemplated the alternative of acknowledging authorship of *The New Era* articles, refusing to write the editorial, and resigning. He felt it would be the honest thing to do. He could get another position in a day, perhaps; perhaps in

a week, a month, six months. He saw himself beating from newspaper office to newspaper office, and returning home night after night with the same story of failure, reduced meantime to shabby shifts and expedients to live. Or he saw himself going to work again at the further side of the ground over which he had laboriously fought his way. Georgia's sickness and the death of the baby had taken all of his savings. The envelope he would get from the cashier next day would contain the money with which to pay the rent. He thought of Georgia, for whom he felt the best conditions he could make were poor enough just then. The tenuous coils of the chain tightened about him. He bent over the desk again, and went on writing with a sense of bondage and abasement. He told himself that it was really Brinsley's editorial; that he had no responsibility on account of it; but for all that there remained in his mind a bitter residuum which reflected him cowardly, skulking, Judas-like.

Talk of the strike grew. The grievance committee of the workmen submitted an ultimatum to Butler, and Butler rejected it. An extra detail of police was sent out to guard the works. All the newspapers said the men would strike May 1st, and it was the night of the 29th of April.

A ring came to Judge House's door-bell, and there entered two men—one short and broad, with heavy jaw and cheek-bones, and a square, belligerent, comely face; the other tall, with neatly trimmed gray whiskers and precise attire. "How are you, Mr. Butler? Good evening, Brother Hawley," said

Judge House, holding out both hands. The three went into the library and the door was closed.

It was after eleven o'clock when the two callers came out. Butler stopped on the steps to relight his cigar. The flame of the match, held between his rounded hands, showed a small, amused smile on his face. The lawyer looked steadily downward, frowning slightly as though something unpleasant lay on his mind.

Judge House stood by the grate in the library, his hand resting on the mantel, looking through the open door by which his guests had departed. The attitude expressed arrested motion; but the fleshy, heavy, staring face seemed to say that the motion was merely mechanical, galvanic. A man whom a frightful discovery had overtaken might have looked that way.

About eleven o'clock next morning the babbling, noteless clamor that came up from the alley below the open window by Jerry's desk was suddenly lifted to a shrill, warring key. No words were distinguishable, but Jerry got up and put his head out of the high window. The alley was full of little running ragamuffins, all scampering towards the street, shouting, with bundles of newspapers under their arms.

Down the hall the city editor was standing, his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, looking particularly contented. Jerry went towards him.

"What's the extra about?" he asked.

"Judge House has enjoined the United Foundries men from striking," said the city editor.

"What?" said Jerry, blankly.

"Yes," said the city editor, "enjoined them from striking. The company's in the court's hands, you know. Butler, as receiver, asked for an injunction, and got it. Hawley, Butler's lawyer, had the decree all made out ready for the judge to sign when they went into court."

"But how can he enjoin them from quitting work?" Jerry asked, incredulously.

"He enjoins 'em from conspiring to quit work in such a way as to injure the business of the company. Of course they can't quit at all without injuring the business of the company."

"It's infamous," Jerry muttered, staring at the city editor.

The city editor laughed indulgently. "It's good, hot news," he said, and went into his room.

As soon as Jerry could get away from the newspaper he went over to *The New Era* office. Dillingham was waiting for him restlessly. The big man laid his hand on Jerry's shoulder solemnly.

"It's a revolution!" he said. "We ought to be out in the streets with muskets on our shoulders."

"It's infamous," said Jerry; "I'm going to write something about it." He went over to the desk.

"Make it hot enough," said Dillingham.

Jerry needed no prompting. The injunction denying the men the right to strike seemed so monstrous to him that for a moment his power of utterance was baffled before it. When the words did come they came in a throng, and he struck

them out desperately, heedless, contemptuous of the consequences.

The inrush of events kept him busy for the next two days. After his work was done Saturday afternoon he went to *The New Era* office and helped Dillingham figure over the bills and make up a budget. The total of the debts was rather formidable—or would have been, as they agreed, but for the \$1000 that Bashford was to get.

It was four o'clock when Jerry went down the broad, dirty steps, slowly, like a tired man. As he came out into the street, already thronged with men and women hurrying homeward, released from a week of care, the pressure behind him sensibly relaxed. His work, too, was done. Sunday was before him. He ran through the street and caught his car with a jump. He stopped a moment on the flagging before his own door. The dim green mass of the park, seen far down the vista of the street, looked particularly inviting. Georgia sat by the front window, listlessly. She was looking out as he came in, and her expression struck him as a little sad and tired. The week's copy of *The New Era* lay open in her lap. As he glanced at her the sad isolation from each other in which they were living side by side seemed somehow lessened.

"It's splendid outdoors," he said, going over to her. "Let's have an early dinner and go for a ride in the park. I'll get a couple of wheels. We haven't been riding in a year."

"Well," said Georgia, dully. In a moment she got up.

Jerry looked at her questioningly. "What's the matter?" he asked. "Don't you feel well?"

"Yes," she said, simply. She started towards the kitchen—stopped—then picked up the paper from the chair.

"You wrote this, didn't you, Jerry?" she asked, quietly, pointing to the article on the front page.

Suddenly a thing which had seemed remote, incidental, unimportant, became very near and relevant and vital. The man against whom the animus of the article bore was Georgia's father.

"Yes, I wrote it," he said, inadequately.

"I thought so," said Georgia; "papa thought so."

Jerry looked around at her, surprised, questioning. "He knows?" he asked.

She smiled a little bitterly. "Somebody sent him a copy of the paper," she said.

"But how did he know I wrote it?"

"You thought he wouldn't find it out?"

"I didn't care to escape any responsibility on account of it, if that's what you mean."

"I guess there's nothing to fear. I don't think my father would send my husband to jail, though my husband would write such things about my father."

"I wasn't thinking of him as your father when I wrote," said Jerry.

"You don't think of me as related to anything you do, except eating and sleeping, do you, Jerry?" she asked.

For a moment he knew it was true, and felt convicted. "I don't know that you are related to

things of this sort that I do," he said, nodding at the paper. In view of the denouement in this particular instance he felt that statement to be inadequate, and he hastened to add: "I'm sorry this is painful to you; but I did what I thought was right."

"Your principles are very good for others; but they've been rather hard on your wife—"

"And baby," were the words on her lips, as Jerry knew; but she did not utter them.

"Say it!" he cried.

She turned away. "There's no use," she said, quietly. "You know what I mean."

"What you mean isn't true," he cried, passionately.

"You're welcome to justify yourself if you can," Georgia returned coolly, and went out to the kitchen.

Jerry dropped down in the chair by the window and stared out. A tragedy loomed menacingly. Now and then a sound came from the kitchen where Georgia was at work—the rattle of a plate or pan—and each time he moved a little as though he would go to her; but each time he settled back again. She seemed to take a very difficult ground: to demand that he apostatize. He felt that he had hurt her, and he was sorry for it; yet he could not go over to her father's side. "She must not interfere with my work," he thought; "if she is to take that attitude the only thing possible for me is to wait until she gets over it."

"Dinner's ready," said Georgia.

When Jerry silently took his place opposite her he expected that she would take an opportunity to quarrel. Her old way had been a flash of anger, as sudden as a summer thunder-shower, clearing away as rapidly. But her way had changed. Jerry did not understand that he had touched something far deadlier than anger—a kind of hard, silent apathy. He offered a dull, commonplace observation. To his surprise she replied as dully and politely. She looked away from him steadily; but she showed neither resentment nor softening—nothing but a dead, apathetic hardness. Oddly enough he resented this and grew restive under it. “I have offered to be friends with her,” he thought, “and have given her a chance to pitch into me. She accepts neither alternative. She is unreasonable.” After a moment, inexplicably, the old lure of her beauty, her piquancy, her rareness came over him; he went around to her side.

“Dear little wife,” he said, “I’m awfully sorry I’ve made you unhappy. I wanted to be good to you.”

“I guess you’ve been good enough to me,” she said, indifferently. “I’m not complaining of that; but you seem to have picked out a road made only for bachelors.”

Jerry sighed. “Hasn’t your path been something like that of the widowed, too?” he asked. She glanced up at him questioningly. “I mean you’ve seemed rather abler to get along without me than I have without you,” he explained.

“No,” she answered, coldly. “Did I tell you

papa was sick?" She asked it with the same indifference.

"No," said Jerry, with no more show of concern than he really felt.

"He is," said Georgia. "I think I'd best go up there and stay to-night unless he gets better."

"Ah," said Jerry. He felt irritated. He had a distinct notion that the judge's illness was merely a sort of trick played on him—a part of some inscrutable scheme of his wife's for punishing him.

"You don't mind?" said Georgia, politely.

"Oh no—not if you're needed. Is it so serious?" Jerry said.

"Of course I'll not stay if they don't need me," Georgia replied. "I'll see this evening. Sidney is coming to let me know."

Quite surprisingly to himself, Jerry flashed out, morosely, "I don't like that fellow hanging around here."

It was merely the snapping of an overstrained nerve. He was ashamed of himself in a moment; but having said it he felt bound to stand by it.

Georgia was drinking the tea. She only looked over the cup and into his eyes, coolly. "He's coming to tell me about my father," she said, slowly.

"I'll go see how he is myself," Jerry retorted.

"And leave word that Mr. Bane is not to come, Mr. Drew having made up his mind to be jealous?" she asked. "You're very absurd, Jerry."

At another moment he would not have spoken so; at another moment she would not have answered as she did. She was still strongly under the impulse

begotten of Jerry's attack upon her father. He was irritated and suffering from the self-reproach of his yielding to Brinsley.

He heard of *The New Era* article again on Monday. Brinsley sent for him in the morning. Since the incident of the week before Jerry's attitude towards his chief had been that of covert rebellion. In proportion as he contemned himself for yielding he assuaged the smart by secretly defying Brinsley.

As Jerry came in the managing editor glanced up forbiddingly. He was evidently in bad humor again. One dark, heavy eyebrow was drawn lower than the other. A copy of *The New Era* lay on his desk.

"I've been told that you wrote this," said the managing editor, laying a thick, white forefinger on the injunction article.

"Yes," said Jerry, grimly, inwardly challenging his chief.

"And that you've been writing most of the strike stuff for this—thing."

"Yes."

"You have an interest in it?"

"Yes."

Brinsley directed his one-sided scowl at the floor for a moment. "Doesn't it occur to you that you can't very consistently write this stuff and the editorials for *The Evening Call*?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know," Jerry answered, with the cheerfulness of utter recklessness. "I never considered myself at all responsible for the stuff on

economic topics I write for *The Evening Call*. It's your ideas, you know ; I'm only the machine."

"Naturally I'd prefer a machine that hadn't been grinding out this sort of stuff."

Jerry accepted it as a challenge. "I don't consider it the newspaper's affair what I do out of office hours," he said.

"You wouldn't expect to put in your time throwing bricks at the editor out of office hours without being called to account for it here?"

"If I decided to throw bricks at the editor, naturally I wouldn't care whether I were called to account for it here or not."

Brinsley's frown darkened. "You mean that you don't care now?"

"I mean that I claim the right to do what I please after I'm through here."

Brinsley was plainly vexed. "But don't you see," he said, testily, "that I can't place confidence in a man in your position who's doing this sort of thing?"

"I don't ask you to put confidence in me," Jerry returned, promptly.

"I don't want you to work for me if I can't put confidence in you," Brinsley answered, hotly.

"You can have my resignation any time," said Jerry.

Brinsley looked up at the young man and down at the pencil he was turning swiftly in his strong fingers. Jerry saw that he did not wish to press the matter to a rupture; he felt that he could smooth it over if he would ; but the recollection of his humiliation was strong in him and a sense of

persecution for his opinions grew out of it. He said nothing.

Brinsley waited a moment. Then he said, quietly, "Very well," and turned abruptly to his desk.

"I'll quit at once," said Jerry.

"Very well," said Brinsley, as before, and Jerry went out.

He was aware that he had gone down with his colors flying, but he got very little satisfaction out of that after the first moment. The main fact was that he was down. It came over him in a rush that he had wrought in that office for four years. Before he knew Georgia he was pegging away daily at that very desk. The awe and pride with which he had entered it came back to him; and with it, for an instant, a kind of terror of the huge, rushing, careless world out of which he had climbed to that eyrie. In an instant that passed. He knew the jumbled, busy world at his feet could never again wear the alien, mysterious, baffling aspect it had borne to him as he came fresh from Tampico. He could measure it now and measure himself against it. He was not frightened by the prospect of going out into it; but he was saddened.

He unlocked a drawer of his desk and took out a few personal things—an almost pitifully meagre little handful that really belonged to him. Then he got up and stood for a moment staring down at the desk. It seemed very inadequate that there should be nothing more to do; that he should just walk out, the very messenger boys not paying attention to his going. To-morrow, he knew, another

man would be at his desk doing his work, and the great machine would grind on, supremely indifferent that he had gone, as it had been supremely indifferent that for four years he gave of his blood and brain to it daily. He entertained himself for an instant with a little burst of childish jealousy of the new man who would slip in before the dust of his slipping out had settled. He felt sure that the head which would bend over that desk in the morning would never give the zeal for the work which he had given. He went out, and as he alighted from the elevator the roar of the presses printing the noon edition came up to him and mocked him.

His plan for the immediate future was ready made. He had thought it out in those scenes which he had been imagining between himself and Brinsley, wherein he had refused to write the editorial about the strike, had acknowledged authorship of *The New Era* articles, defied Brinsley, and gone proudly across the street to offer himself to Dillingham. To Dillingham he went now, only not proudly and gladly, as he had feigned, but humbly and sadly.

"I've come to take that job of editing," he said to Dillingham, as he entered.

"I guess you've really had it for some time, Jerry," said the editor, grinning.

"I want to go into partnership with you," said Jerry.

Dillingham got up a little wonderingly, but smiling. "You've quit *The Evening Call*?" he said.

"Yes," said Jerry; "I'm *New Era* now, first, last, all the time."

"Bully," said Dillingham, quietly, holding out his hand. "We're going to win, too."

"Why, of course," said Jerry. "In fact, we've got to win now." And saying it made it seem almost so.

He worked fitfully and with half a mind. The better half was running out to meet the new conditions in which he found himself. It was rather simple. He had no money, and there was no immediate prospect of dividends from *The New Era*. But the circulation had jumped up quite remarkably the last two weeks; the paper was coming out—was beginning to bloom. There would be a little time of hard sledding; then a straight, prosperous road. Meantime it would be well to remind Bashford again to get the \$1000 in hand—and he could get through the lean season somehow. In this view his resignation from the newspaper seemed unimportant, or even fortunate. As he got nearer home and began shaping the thing for its presentation to Georgia it took on a more serious aspect. He rather shrank from the feminine inability to overlook, to concrete. They were dependent on his wages, and his wages had stopped—that, he suspected uneasily, would be the way it would look to Georgia.

He had gone out of the house Saturday night after dinner, and the subject of Judge House's illness had not been mentioned between them since. Georgia had gone out Sunday morning, and again after the early dinner. He knew that she had been

to her father's, but had said nothing. He now felt resentful that events should have befallen in that way. He felt their quarrel to be senseless, and he regretted that he should have to tell her of his dismissal from the paper while he was at the disadvantage with her which the quarrel implied. He went in, however, with a carefully arranged air of cheerfulness. Georgia stood by the table packing some things in a bag.

She glanced up quickly as he entered. "Papa's a great deal worse," she said, quite as though she had been expecting him at that moment and as though he had come expressly to inquire about the judge.

Jerry saw that the case was grave. For the first time he thought of the judge's illness as a serious thing.

"Is it—dangerous?" he asked, quickly.

"He is in great danger," Georgia replied. "It's his old stomach trouble. I'm going up there right away." She glanced around the room. "I guess I've left everything for you."

Jerry knew that the calamity of her father's sickness had overwhelmed everything else in her mind for the moment, and he was sorry for her.

"I'll walk up there with you," he said, thinking to tell her on the way.

"The carriage is waiting for me," she said, simply. He remembered dimly having seen a carriage turning around in the street.

Georgia glanced up at him quickly. He saw that the situation between them came across her mind; but she would not stop to consider it.

She started towards the door, hesitated an instant, said "Good-bye," and for the space of a second waited for him. He made no sign of moving towards her, and she went on out.

Jerry stepped over to the front window. As she prepared to enter the carriage the door was thrown open from within, and Jerry saw a man's hand and sleeve.

"Bane!" he thought. He had known it from the moment she spoke of the carriage; but somehow, quite without reason, the proof of it seemed to him a kind of dramatic damnatory evidence. A witless rage overcame him. When it passed he blamed Georgia, telling himself that no matter how foolish his objection to this man was his wife should have respected it. He tried to think that it had happened inadvertently. Considering his wife's distracted manner and the haste with which she was gathering up the things she needed, he could see it was likely that Bane had just driven down to tell her that her father was worse and to take her down there. But that did not keep him from giving way to hatred of Bane.

ON the way down-town next morning Jerry reproached himself for not having told Georgia of his discharge from the paper anyway. He said that she was entitled to know it, and he had a foreboding that his failure to tell her at once would make the telling more difficult in the end—would put the thing in a false light, as though he had attempted to conceal it.

He found Dillingham humped over his desk smoking a cob-pipe and looking very grave.

"Well, by jolly!" said the editor, "I spent last evening and night down at Butlerville."

"Oh," said Jerry, with instant interest. He paused, and looked the question he did not dare to ask.

"It looks a little blue," said the editor. "That injunction has knocked the strike cold; there's no doubt of that. The men are afraid of the court. They feel it's some big unassailable power that's in the hands of Butler. They dassn't go against it. They feel that they've been licked, and they're sort of stunned and sullen about it. They're a mighty blue lot. Of course some of them talk about hiring lawyers and fighting the injunction; but that's mostly talk. Most of the

men are simply knocked cold; and that's the truth about it."

"It's an infernal outrage," Jerry muttered, perfunctorily.

"I guess we won't be able to do much down there for the present," Dillingham said, in a low voice.

They felt a kind of shame in reckoning their personal advantage in the success or failure of the strike. Nothing more was said of it; but the words sounded unpleasant to Jerry.

"Did you see John yesterday?" Dillingham asked, after a moment.

"No. Hasn't he been around?" said Jerry.

"No—oh, he'll be around to-morrow sure. I need some money to-day, really, but if he comes around to-morrow—of course he will come to-day or to-morrow."

"Yes," said Jerry, absently. He turned to his desk with a sigh. The work had no savor for him that day.

When he went home he picked up the evening paper from the door-step and hesitated a moment, he scarcely knew why, before applying the latch-key. He felt that Georgia would not be in; but somehow he instinctively sought to shield himself from the disappointment of finding her out. He thought it would be best to go over to the restaurant and get dinner without going up-stairs. But he did not act on the thought. Going up, he let his feet fall slowly and noiselessly as he listened for a sound from the flat. As he pushed open the door

the dismal, chilled air of emptiness and disuse rushed out to meet him, and his heart sank. He stayed only long enough to make sure that Georgia was not there; then he went for his dinner. The noisy, crowded, kitchen-scented, little restaurant offended and distressed him. He bolted some food and hurried out to the street, where he loitered aimlessly until dark, dreading the empty rooms at home.

He lit the gas as soon as he went in, and his eye caught a white roll on the table. He lifted it up curiously. Unrolling it disclosed a snowy garment decked with lace. He knew in a moment that Georgia had left it there when she packed her bag, and that she had not been back since, or she would have seen it. Quite illogically the immaculate thing of linen and lace and frills quickened his melancholy, deepened his sense of isolation, as though it showed that she was veritably gone.

He went over to the window and lit his pipe, against the rules. Presently he picked up the evening paper from the stand where he had tossed it. He glanced at the page, and all but started.

Looking up at him from the front page was a picture of his father-in-law, two columns wide. He caught up the paper with eager interest and read, under the picture, "A. Franklin House, the Eminent Jurist who is Near Death's Door."

In the upper right-hand corner of the page was a scare-head beginning, "Judge House Very Sick." Jerry read the article breathlessly. Towards the bottom he found this paragraph :

"Judge House has been deeply grieved by certain malignant criticisms of his injunction against the United Foundries men. These brutal diatribes have wounded Judge House's sensitive mind greatly. To them the physicians attribute, in part, his illness."

The paper had itself questioned the justice and legality of the injunction; had by implication editorially censured the judge for issuing it. Yet the reporter was now permitted to say that the injunction was defended by all jurists, and that no person of character or intelligence had dreamed of questioning the judge's motives.

Immediately preceding this reference to the injunction was a little interview with Sidney Bane describing the judge's condition, and Jerry instantly imagined a connection between the two which the article did not expressly avow, immediately suspected that Bane had inspired the reference to the injunction. He knew that Georgia would see the article, and he thought she would sympathize with the way it condemned him and cast him out from its high, remote ground. At the end of the article appeared a line: "The judge's daughter, Mrs. Drew, is with him." There again Jerry seemed to see Bane's hand.

As though a vista had cleared before him, he saw that it was right that he should hate Bane. The pitiful impotence of his hatred humbled him. What difference did it make to Bane? What difference did it make to anybody? In his dejection his need of Georgia came back to him with double force.

He got up restlessly and went out of doors with a half-coherent idea that he might meet her somewhere. It seemed to him that if he could see her a moment and explain things to her, and feel that there was understanding and trust between them again, nothing else would matter in the least.

It was dark, and he walked down the street hastily; for now that he started, it seemed that his chance of meeting her, which he half believed in, would be missed unless he hurried. He took a car down to Heine Street, and when he came in front of the judge's house he saw that it was quite foolish and useless—that he would not see her. The front room was light, as usual, and she might come into sight there. He walked by very slowly until his view of the room was entirely closed. Then he turned around and walked back, very slowly, his eyes fixed on the windows. As he came opposite the middle pane he arrested his motion for an instant. The instant grew to a minute; but his feet did not stir. He stood in a kind of wretched fascination, unable to give up the chance of seeing her.

Presently he pulled himself together and turned away, and as he did so he felt as though he were somehow meeting an irreparable loss. He had scarcely faced down the street before he was aware of two men, very near him, approaching slowly. One of them was Bane. Jerry saw that they had been watching him. Another time he would have felt ashamed. Now he did not. As his hard eyes fell on Bane, tall, easily-moving, self-possessed, elegant, he felt a conviction that this man had done

him a monstrous wrong. To his eyes at that moment Bane's elegance, his self-possession, his air of prosperity seemed to affirm it, to insult him with it. For an instant his inward sense was that of struggling to burst something which bound him.

Bane looked at him coolly, then bowed civilly. Jerry passed him without moving his head. In an instant he heard Bane's cool voice, speaking to his companion. "Yes; that's the man," he said.

As though the voice released him, the sense of an inward struggle ceased. Jerry turned quickly and stepped beside Bane. Bane paused. He was perfectly cool, but his coolness gave him no advantage now.

"Did you speak to me?" said Jerry. He did not raise his voice, but the words were none the less a challenge; an insult.

"No," said Bane.

"I thought you did," said Jerry. The manner implied an equivocation on Bane's part.

Evidently Bane so understood it. "You ought to know that I wouldn't be likely to," he said, looking calmly into Jerry's eye.

It was the perfection of insolence; but the icy drop fell on Jerry's heat like a drop of water on white-hot iron. Jerry knew that he was then no match for Bane in polite fence; but he had a ruder way. "I know it wouldn't be healthy for you to," he said.

The rudeness seemed to shock Bane from his perfect poise. He frowned with irritation. His reply came quick and unconsidered: "You are an ass."

Bane's youthful companion tittered.

Jerry's arm shot out. Bane threw up one hand vainly, and went over like a toppled log. As he came down the back of his head struck on the stone coping at the inner edge of the walk. His head flopped to one side from the force of the impact, and he lay sprawled on the flagging, white, motionless.

The young fellow who had been walking with him ran up with a cry of alarm and knelt beside him.

Jerry stood for a moment, looking calmly down at the two; then he walked away without haste, without looking back.

He felt quite serene. Bane was dead. He had not meant to kill him; but he was dead. Jerry was glad of it. That hatred and obsession was gone out of his life forever. He felt that all the trouble had come through Bane; he felt his hatred of that fellow to have been a foul, poisonous thing. But it was over with forever.

XXVI

JERRY turned south in Clark Street without any definite objective point. He was not afraid. He walked along leisurely, perfectly aware of his surroundings. He noted the people lounging in front of the stores and those who passed him. He thought "He is dead" over and over. Then, without his willing it, his mind began going over the scene at Judge House's. He imagined people stopping on the street, starting, gaping, asking questions breathlessly; the young fellow running into the house to give the alarm. He fancied Georgia running out to Bane's body, aghast. At first he did not ask himself how he would stand in her mind; it did not occur to him. In his febrile, jumbled imaginings she was merely the central figure, curiously alien from him, however, like all the others. He thought, "They will arrest me." He did not flinch from the thought of arrest; but he did not wish to be rudely seized, to be pounced upon with clamor and hubbub, surrounded by a staring throng, as though he were a fleeing pick-pocket. There were a few simple things he would like to do before he was locked up; but he felt himself incapable of doing them, or even of thinking about them. He felt himself perfectly cool,

perfectly self-possessed, yet he could not divert his mind from this one thing. In respect of everything else he was stupid, formless, rudderless. And all the while deep in the undercurrent of his thought something said, "He is not dead"; but he would not let this come to the surface, would not think of it, as one nerves one's self by facing the worst that is possible.

He thought, "They will call in a doctor and the doctor will pronounce him dead. Then they will send for the police. At most it will take twenty minutes."

He looked at his watch. It was a quarter to eight. "Good God," he thought, with a sense of rousing, of waking up, "it happened not ten minutes ago!" He had thought it was nearer an hour. Then, in spite of himself, he began thinking, "Maybe he is not dead, after all." He must wait a couple of hours before he could be sure. Those two hours rose before him, an infinity of torturing minutes, each with its question, its doubt, its cumulative suspense. He thought of going back to the house, but he flinched from that. He started down the street, and paused in front of the entrance to a theatre. People were entering under the glaring electric lights. The inner doors were open and the strains of the music came out. The scene was bright, animated; it held that indefinite promise of something romantic, interesting, which belongs to the theatre by birthright. Jerry went in with desperate resolution, taking a gallery seat. He saw two acts of an impossible melodrama indifferently acted. It reminded him of things he had

seen at Hartley in his boyhood. When he came out it was ten o'clock.

"Bane is dead," he told himself, and his heart turned to lead. He walked slowly down the street without pause or hesitation until he came to the intersection of Chicago Avenue. He looked over at the bald stone front of the police-station. He could see nothing unusual. A couple of policemen stood talking on the flagging a little aside from the entrance, but under the full glare of the arc lamp over the door. "They may be talking about me," he thought. But the men turned and strolled west carelessly.

Jerry crossed the street, and, taking the north side of the avenue, walked slowly west in the direction of the station, but on the opposite side. Suddenly he felt the rush and clangor of the cable-cars on Clark Street to be an intolerable affliction. It hurt his nerves. A couple of girls coming from the opposite way half stopped and smiled an invitation. Jerry looked at them with a strained face, as though he would entreat them not to put so much as a breath in his way.

Across the street a very burly, blue-coated figure was coming down the police-station steps deliberately. The officer wore the cap and chevrons of a lieutenant. Jerry knew him. The officer came down to the flagging. Jerry struck directly across the street. The blue-coated figure paused a moment, then doubled up with fat deliberateness and sat upon the steps. In a moment he looked up and saw Jerry approaching.

"In an instant," Jerry thought, "he will jump up and run out to arrest me—no, he is going to wait."

As he approached he noticed the hard, challenging look in the officer's eye. He stepped up on the flagging hardily.

The policeman's face lighted. "Oh, hullo, Jerry," he said, holding out a broad, fat hand, without rising. "How are you? 'Ain't seen you for a 'coon's age. Where you going?"

Jerry gave his hand, smilingly. "I'm going in here," he said, indicating the saloon next door.

After a moment he got away and went through the saloon, out to the alley, so to the street. An instant before he encountered the officer he had told himself that he wished Bane to be dead. Now that he knew him to be alive a frightful burden rolled away from him. He lifted his face to the night, and felt that he could bear any other ill now that he had escaped that deadly thing, murder. In the rebound of his spirits he went too far. The encounter with Bane seemed trivial—a little "scrap" in the street. He could almost laugh over it.

By the time he had reached home he saw that the encounter ought to make a climax in his relations with the judge and Bane. He began planning how he could get Georgia away from them and move over to the south side, or, better still, to some of those shady, quiet, suburban places out west of the city, and cut off all intercourse with the houses. Georgia would probably wish to keep up a decent appearance so far as her father was

concerned, but that could be easily managed. Then he began to be troubled lest the affair with Bane should be presented to her in a way that would prejudice her against him. He wondered if she knew of it. He wished that he could see her and talk with her about it. It was obviously too late to think of going to the house; yet he felt the necessity of doing something at once. When it came to writing, he found it difficult to put the thing in the right light. After an attempt or two he saw that it would be much better simply to ask her to see him. So he wrote a note telling her he wished to see her as soon as possible, and asking her to come to their flat next day at four. When he had carried the note down to the street and dropped it in the mail-box he felt relieved.

XXVII

DILLINGHAM was usually first at *The New Era* office, but Jerry found the door locked when he got down in the morning. He took up the morning papers and some labor publications, and went through them for items and suggestions, working on until one o'clock. He was rather surprised that Dillingham had not come in. On his way to the lunch-counter the trouble about Bane came back to his mind afresh, so that he thought of running up to the flat to see if Georgia had not come in. He wished not to miss Dillingham, however, and went back to the office.

The door was open. Dillingham sat by the window, his long legs stuck out in front of his chair, his big hands clasped in his lap, his faded hat pulled over his brows. His attitude expressed such weariness that Jerry called out to know if he were sick.

Dillingham looked up at him with dull eyes; then he went over heavily and shut the door and came back to his seat by the window.

"Yes, I'm sick, Jerry," he said. He sat in the chair, with his legs thrust out and his hands clasped in his lap, as he had been before. "We're busted," he added, quietly.

Jerry whirled around. "Didn't Bashford get the—" He caught his breath.

"Yes, John got the thousand all right," said Dillingham.

"Then how—what's the matter?"

Dillingham waited a moment, as though he were reluctant to put it in words. "John's run off with Mabel Hess," he said, gently.

Jerry walked mechanically over in front of Dillingham's chair. He stood motionless, quite at loss for a moment; then he took a step farther and leaned his shoulder against the window-sill. "Run—" he began, vaguely.

"Yes, run off with Mabel Hess—and the thousand dollars," said Dillingham, as before. He put up his big hand and pulled his stubby mustache, looking steadily at the floor. "I'm damned if I'd 'a' believed it of John," he added, thoughtfully, in his gentlest voice.

Jerry was beginning to think. "Oh, but there's some mistake," he said.

Dillingham shook his head. "No mistake," he said. "I suspected something was wrong when he didn't show up yesterday, and last night Mrs. Hess came over to see me. She had a note from the girl. I felt sorry for that woman. Course I didn't tell her anything about the money, nor about the other wife—she don't know that. Then this morning I went over to see Frankel. I waited around until nine o'clock; then he came in, and I says, 'Mr. Frankel, did you let John Bashford have that thousand dollars?' The man about jumped

out of his boots. 'My gracious!' says he, 'didn't Bashford turn that money over to the paper?' Then I told him about the girl, and he went plumb crazy."

Dillingham had been staring at the floor and speaking in a perfectly monotonous voice. "He's a nasty little wretch, that Frankel," he went on, thoughtfully. "He began blackguarding John right away—and Mabel Hess. Course John's ruined me, I reckon." He paused and looked up at Jerry with a haggard grin. "It ain't much of a ruin, but it's enough for me. Still, when Frankel began blackguarding him—especially when he said a word about that girl—I told him to shut up. Then he turned on me. We had it pretty hot for a couple of hours. He said we were a lot of swindlers, and he's gone off to get out an attachment on those two notes of mine. I reckon the deputy 'll be around here to take possession any minute."

The editor looked around the office with a sigh. "I guess this is about the hardest rub she ever got," he said. He took a quick breath and pulled himself together. "Still, it's a mighty sight harder on you, Jerry, than it is on me."

A burly form topped by a slouch hat and adorned with abundant whiskers appeared at the door. Under the lapel of the wrinkled blue coat the edge of a serrated metal disk, badge of authority, was visible. The caller held a document in his hand, and referred to it as he stepped in.

"Wilson T. Dillingham?" he said, inquiringly, deciphering the name on the paper.

"That's me," said Dillingham.

"Attachment," said the stranger, simply, stepping in.

Dillingham gave Jerry a swift glance, and Jerry, understanding, stepped into the hall, leaving the catastrophe to descend.

He loitered a moment at the farther end of the hall—long enough to see the deputy sheriff tack a notice on the office door. Then he went away, repeating to himself, "We're broke."

He knew enough of affairs to understand that continuing *The New Era* was out of the question for the present. In a little while Frankel might be mollified, or they might find another backer. For the present he was adrift. The thing that had lain big and still in his mind all day now sprang up and became tyrannously dominant. He was to see Georgia. It was earlier than the hour he had mentioned, but he hurried home. She might come earlier.

The rooms were locked, as he had left them; but when he ran down and lifted the flap to the letter-box he saw a white square of envelope within, having "City" in the corner in Georgia's hand. He got the letter in his hand and ran up-stairs, fearing. As soon as he had the door shut behind him he tore open the envelope and pulled out the note. It read:

"I can scarcely believe what I have heard of you—about Sidney last night. I would not believe it if Mr. Trobury had not seen it all and told me. Why should you put that insult upon me? There could have been no other cause. I cannot come this afternoon. You must apologize to Sidney first.
GEORGIA."

Jerry put the note back in the envelope, the envelope back in his pocket.

"So it's all over ; this is the end of it," he said to himself, quite as though he were saying, "It's a fine day," or, "Good-morning."

He did not attempt to analyze the note : to put himself in the attitude of his wife when she wrote it, to understand just what state of mind in her it reflected, to measure just what quantity of reproof and indignation she meant by it. The thing to him was that she demanded that he apologize to Bane ; she had seemed to make that a condition of meeting him. He never for an instant considered that such a course on his part was even possible. Since she demanded that he apologize to Bane, doing it was simply out of the question. "This is the end of it," he repeated. He felt no particular emotion for the moment except intense irritation that she should take Bane's part. For a moment it did not present itself to him otherwise than as a deep vexation, like losing a prized book or missing a train. It was perfectly clear to him that Georgia had betrayed him, cast him off in favor of Bane. At the crisis she chose Bane's side. The thought of Georgia standing beside Bane, comforting Bane, opposing him, her husband, filled him with anger. He went over to the front window and sat down, under a dim impression that he was going to think about it.

"This is the end of it," he repeated to himself. Then, suddenly, the force of that broke over him.

It meant not that it would be one day, two days, a week, until he would see her ; but that he would

never see her any more, never know her again in the sweet and sacred relation of wife. Never! The word seemed to unroll from his lips forever. The constriction in his heart was so painful, in the mere bodily pain of it, that he winced and bent forward in his chair. The dream of his life—*The New Era*, success, power, happiness, all the big, fine things that had swum continually before his eyes from the beginning—shrivelled swiftly away like gauze touched by fire, vanished like a puff of smoke before a wind. The prospect of his life closed at his feet. He saw himself, with terrible, convincing distinctness, stripped, poor, unworthy, a mere vagrant atom, a simple clod without the saving alloy.

The familiar, unchanged aspect of the room mocked him; the chair she had sat in, the things she had touched, seemed to stare at him with pitiless deadness. The tree that waved in front of the window took on, mysteriously, an effect of stupidity and falsity. Its flourishes seemed a pretence, as though it were a tree poorly painted on a theatrical scene. The people in the street with their pretence of going and coming on a purpose seemed equally lying, transparently futile. The room especially wounded him at every turn. The things seemed to allege her a traitor, to jeer at his trust in her.

That was it—she had betrayed him for Bane. He stood up. He had formed a resolution. It came to him at first as an errant suggestion, and he had not considered it seriously; then in a moment it took possession of him with an absolute tyranny. It

seemed the only thing to do. He had left the newspaper. *The New Era* was gone; his wife was gone. He had only to take a bag with some clothes and walk out of the flat, and the whole epoch of his life up to that moment would be definitely closed. In his new place, wherever that might be, there would be no link binding him to the past.

The dominant thing in his mind was resentment, intense, burning, against Georgia's espousal of Bane's side. His plans had fallen through. He had been dismissed from the newspaper—unjustly, he felt; Bashford had wrecked *The New Era*. Then, while he was at his poorest and lowest, undone for the moment, and, in a way, helpless, his wife had left him and put herself by the side of Bane, the rich, the elegant, the supercilious.

In such a way the thing arranged itself in his mind, and the thought was so intolerable, so maddening, that he felt he must do something at once; he must in some way strike his blow, make his protest against it, as one tortured beyond endurance by physical pain screams and flings out his arms to keep from going mad.

All the time he was packing his bag he felt at bottom that he was doing a wild, desperate thing, that he was making the case hopeless when it need not be so; but such was the bitterness of his mind that he took a singular satisfaction in making it hopeless. And he must do something. He felt that he could not go on at all without having in some way expressed his utter repudiation of

Georgia's suggestion that he abase himself before Bane.

When he had stuffed the bag with the things he could lay his hands on readily, he took Georgia's note and scrawled across the bottom of it :

" You ask me to apologize to Bane before you can see me. I detest Bane. I am sorry that I did not kill him. It is just as well that I go away. I have been discharged from *The Evening Call*, and *The New Era* has failed. I have little left to offer you.
JERRY."

Then something gave way in his mind. A flood of tenderness, of ineffable regret, poured over him. He scrawled " God bless you, dear," below the signature.

He laid his latch-key on the table beside the note, and picked up his bag with a hand that trembled. At that moment he heard a light, rapid step on the flagging below. It paused and turned in towards their door. His heart beat suffocatingly. He caught up the note to crumple it, and glanced about for a place to hide his bag in. He heard the faint tinkling of the bell in the flat above. Georgia had a key ; still he awaited. The door opened. He heard women's voices greeting in the hall. Then there was silence, slowly bodying itself to him as an irrevocable sentence.

He tossed down the note ; but the thought came to him : " In an hour perhaps she may come that way." It seemed frightfully cruel that she should find the flat empty and this note from him. He thought of Bane, and the insensate thing in his

heart said, "Go ;" but as he went there were tears in his eyes, as though he were entreating himself against the cruelty of his sentence.

He went down-stairs doggedly. The front door swung to behind him, and the lock clicked ominously. He walked rapidly down the street.

XXVIII

THE hot sun of June, high in an immense cloudless sky, shone down with pitiless intensity. All life crept painfully under it. Moreover, it was past noon on Saturday, and business had stopped; or, if it went at all, it moved dully, gaspingly, reluctantly. The down-town streets looked deserted. The cable-cars went by half empty. The effect was as though a huge stream had suddenly shrunk away—was running out in dribbles and sluggish rills.

Jerry came out of a little stairway on Harrison Street, and went up to Fifth Avenue and turned north, towards the river. He walked slowly, not with the satisfying relaxation of one whose weekly work is done; but carelessly, indifferently, as one who goes to do something else, not caring what it shall be. He wore a dark shirt, indifferently laundered, and no tie. A loose flannel jacket flapped about him. He was vestless, and his chin and cheeks were rough with a three days' beard. His shoulders stooped slightly, and he moved with his head bent forward. When he passed *The Evening Call* office he half stopped, and looked down the imposing stretch of the counting-room. It was empty, save for a couple of clerks gossiping idly behind the front counter.

He thought how often he had gone in there with a sense of belonging to it, and it struck him with a thrill of wonder and self-pity how swiftly and absolutely he had dropped out of sight. Only a few weeks before he had seemed to have a place permanently, to have become in his small way a part of the great life of the city. He had come and gone with a feeling of being fixed in the burly machine about him. And now! If he had been dead he would not have been more completely out of it. He was turning this over in his mind sadly as he came to the little place on Lake Street where he commonly took his lunch, because it gave him a good walk and was far out of the track of those who knew him. He thought again, as he had often done, of going off into the country somewhere. The still shade of Tampico, the peaceful stretches of grass and grain, came before him, and his heart burst for them. Then swiftly he knew again, as he had known whenever he thought of going, that it was impossible; that he was as powerless to go as though he were caged. He could live only where he might meet his wife.

He perched on the stool beside the circular counter and gave his order to the waiter. As he spoke he was aware that the man on the next stool glanced up quickly. Jerry turned his head, and found himself looking into the face of John Bashford.

While the slow, doubtful smile was coming to Bashford's lips, Jerry noted that his linen was as immaculate, his necktie as proper, his clothes

as stylish, his handsome face as full and cleanly shaven as ever. For a moment his heart hardened. Even as he took the proffered hand and said the commonplace, "When did you get back?" he was thinking: "This man is much worse than I. Why is he always trig, jaunty, well with the world, clothed with an air of success, having his own way?"

"I got back day before yesterday," said Bashford, as though it were from an ordinary, incidental journey. "How's *The New Era*?"

"There isn't any," said Jerry.

Bashford looked up quickly, questioningly; then dropped his eyes and called the waiter, and made him bring another spoon.

The incident was not without its effect on Jerry. He thought: "If Bashford were arraigned on the Day of Judgment, before he sat down in the witness-chair he would beckon a celestial bailiff and whisper to him to flick the dust off it—and the bailiff would do it and apologize." He could condemn this Bashford endlessly on grounds that he knew to be just, yet the old, calm, self-possessed Bashford could rise and overcome him, put him down, and the Bashford he loved could come back, appeal to him with the old, simple, direct, unquestioning friendship. He did this almost at once.

"Are you off this afternoon?" he asked, as they rose together from the counter.

"Yes," said Jerry. He was half-reluctant; yet it was good to have Bashford to talk to, to look at, to feel as something friendly, something personally his own.

"Got time to smoke a cigar?" Bashford asked, as they came to the cashier's desk. His eyes rested in Jerry's for a moment with a liking which was unmistakable. Surely it was good to have Bashford again. The familiar face and voice soothed him; the familiar trick of nosing the cigars before buying them somehow cheered him.

When they got on the street Bashford said, as though it were an inspiration, "Suppose we go to the park, Jerry? You haven't anything to do now?"

"No," said Jerry. Then he laughed. "I haven't anything to do any of the time now." Bashford looked at him incredulously, and as they waited for the street-car he explained. "I've quit *The Call*—by request—and *The New Era* has gone by the board. My visible means of support is getting up stuff for a lurid weekly, printed on pink paper and circulated in the country. I cut out all the murders and divorces from a couple of dozen dailies and fix 'em up a little—usually adding a few grewsome or scandalous details of my own invention, and I get fifteen dollars per week for doing it."

"Well—have you tried the other newspapers?" Bashford asked.

"No," said Jerry, shortly—and after a moment he added, "I haven't cared to. This job was offered to me, or I guess I would have died of inanition." It struck him that he was revealing more than he meant to. "I think we'll get *The New Era* started up again as soon as Dillingham gets back," he added, indifferently. "He's gone out to Iowa to visit and sort of get himself together."

"I expect he took the failure of the paper pretty hard?" said Bashford.

The very brazenness of the question showed Jerry that Bashford had argued it all out with himself, defended himself, justified himself. He saw, as though a light had been turned on, that Bashford, having assured himself that he was not culpable, asked this brazen question only as a kind of proof to himself that he believed in his own verdict of "not guilty." But although Jerry saw the moral tangle, he did not revolt from it. He simply accepted it, as one accepts cross-eyes or a club-foot in one he likes.

"He was pretty badly broken up," said Jerry, simply.

They fell into a silence which lasted until they reached the park. Walking towards the lake, they came to a vacant, shaded bench on the bank of a canal and sat down. Some swans were swimming slowly, gracefully back and forth near them, and a couple of children were tossing bread on the water. Some way, in a moment, without his having been previously aware of a change in his attitude towards Bashford, it seemed to Jerry that they were back on the old, familiar, open footing.

In a moment he asked, quite simply, "Where's Mabel?"

"Over at her mother's," said Bashford. He bent forward, digging into the cinder-path with his stick. "I'm going to get a divorce and marry her," he said.

"That's good," said Jerry, gravely.

"I guess it's the best thing," said Bashford, wearily. After a long pause, which bore the subject in upon both of them more powerfully than words could have done, he added, "I wish you'd drop around there; you might do some good—with her mother."

"I will," Jerry promised, sincerely.

"I suppose," said Bashford, slowly, poking the ground with his stick, "it would have been better if I had got the divorce in the first place."

"Yes," Jerry assented, readily.

"But I couldn't," Bashford went on—"at least, I didn't seem able to. It seemed to me that she ought to go with me anyhow if she really cared. You know something of my other experience—my marriage; I don't know but there's always been a sort of devil in me ever since. It's hard for me to have faith. I demanded that of her; and once I demanded it nothing else seemed possible. Maybe it was mere selfishness, devilishness in me—but I couldn't forego the conditions I had proposed. I'd always sworn I'd never get a divorce—partly on the child's account—partly because I was sorry for the woman herself. It seemed to me that she—Mabel—would see it as I did; and I had my way."

Again there was a vital pause.

"Things happen as they will. I'm not sorry for it. I think it's probably better this way. There's only so much happiness; it don't make much difference how you take your share."

"Were you happy, then?" Jerry asked, merely from curiosity.

"Yes," Bashford replied, decisively, "for a few days—that is, I was; and I dare say she would have been if she could have understood."

He paused, lounging back on the bench and looking across the sunny meadow, gorgeous with midsummer flowers.

"Happy," he said, with a swift, half-stifled sigh, "while it lasted. I doubt if she was really happy at all; but I was. We went to Washington and New York and Boston, and then down the St. Lawrence and to Detroit. That took two weeks. We were going up around the straits. But I took a little inventory and found I had not money enough left. So I told her something or other. I don't know whether or not she guessed the real reason—probably she did; but she didn't say anything, she never had said anything. We went to a little town on a little river—a beautiful little country-place. One day we were sitting on the bank of the river. It was about sundown. On the other side of the stream there was a road leading to town. You could toss a stone across. Along that road came a woman and a small boy carrying a great big basket full of clean clothes—evidently somebody's washing, which they were taking home. The washerwoman walked ahead, carrying one end of the basket, and her boy carried the back end. He was a thin little fellow about seven or eight. He held the handle of the basket with both hands, and leaned far back to support the weight of it. They had to go very slowly, for the boy stumbled along. Opposite us he called to his mother, and

they set the basket down. The boy straightened his back as though it hurt him and seemed to be crying. The woman went around to his end of the basket, and knelt beside him and rubbed his arms where they ached. After she got up the boy stood feeling of his arms and trying to rub them with his weak hands, while his mother stood over him, comforting and encouraging him. By-and-by she took up her end of the basket and the boy took up his, and they started on very slowly, the woman looking back, cheering the boy, and the boy trying to respond as his legs bent and his feet stumbled under the load. They went slowly down the path and out of sight. Mabel had never moved or taken her eyes from them. As soon as they were out of sight she turned to me. Her lips were trembling, and she looked out of her eyes as though she had been stabbed through the heart. She cried out, 'Take me home, Jack!' Then, before I could say anything, she folded her arms on my lap and lay her face on them and was shaking with sobs. I knew it was all up, but I did what a fellow could. When she stopped crying she picked up her hat and got up. 'Take me home,' she said. 'Can we go to-night?' I tried to talk with her, but it was no use. 'That might have been mother and Freddie,' she said; 'maybe they're doing that now.' We started home as soon as we could, but we couldn't go fast enough. She was thinking of that every minute. I thought it would be hard for her to go into the house and face her mother; but as soon as we got near it she broke away from me and

almost ran to the steps, she was so eager. She just called 'Good-night' to me and went right up to the door. Freddie let her in and I came away." Bashford let out a long breath. "I haven't seen her since. But I'm going to get a divorce and marry her."

Silence fell. The swans had swum away. Some young girls on the next bench were talking in a high key, suggestive of impudence and giggling. By a common impulse the two men arose.

"You'll go around there?" Bashford asked.

"Yes," Jerry answered, quickly. He saw that Bashford did not take Georgia into account, had avoided mentioning her, and he knew he had guessed they were separated. In the instant that they stood by the bench, Bashford looked into his face with the old frank liking.

"Jerry, old man," he said, "you're sick—mighty sick—sicker than you know about. Go away somewhere and get a rest."

Jerry shook his head. "I haven't the price," he said, without shame.

"Say, I've got sixty dollars here; you take fifty and go—do that now. You don't know how much good it would do me." It was plainly a boon that Bashford asked.

But Jerry shook his head. "I couldn't," he said; "I must stay here. I'm going over to my room. Come see me to-morrow." He gave the number. The friends shook hands and parted, Bashford wondering, Jerry past wonder at another and careless of wonder at himself.

As he walked swiftly through the park some words of Bashford's kept coming back to him again and again.

"I couldn't do anything else—I couldn't. Once I had made that condition it seemed impossible to waive it. I felt that she must yield; that she ought to yield; that anything else was impossible."

The story he had heard had strangely loosened and shaken his emotions. He understood Bashford's mental condition. Had not he himself lived under it for six wretched weeks? He had made conditions: it had seemed impossible to him to do anything but abide by them. Yielding to his wife had been to him as a thing he could not do—a thing utterly beyond him, like flying to the moon. In the light of Bashford's story he saw himself in a new way and Georgia in a new way. In the scene they filled Bane was an inconsequential, pigmy accessory. It was as though he had been looking at Bane through a telescope and now suddenly reversed the glass. He cared nothing at all about Bane; he scarcely thought about him. His one idea, big as the world, was to see Georgia, to put himself right with her, to feel peace and love between them. He got on a cable-car, and answered an old lady's anxious inquiry as to whether they had passed Wisconsin Street without being conscious of a break in his thoughts.

To see Georgia! He did not think of how he should approach her or of what he should say to her. The idea of seeing her possessed him alone. He did not think whether she would be at home or

whether she would forgive him. Once the thought that she might refuse him, reject him, came, and he rushed away from it, not daring to stay in its presence. He knew, below his formulated thoughts, that he was staking everything on the throw ; that if she would not see him, would not agree with him—

Even down there he could not think of what there would be for him then.

He walked very rapidly after he left the car, and as he climbed the well-remembered brownstone steps he found himself breathing laboriously, like one who has run ; he felt the nerves in his fingers twitching as he reached for the button that rung the bell.

A strange maid answered the ring. He asked for Mrs. Drew, and, without premeditation, withheld his name—the name stuck in his throat. The maid looked at him doubtfully ; but something in his face reassured her.

Jerry went into the high, formal hall, over the bearskin rug that he remembered very well, and into the room beyond it. He sat down and arose instantly. While his life hung in the balance at the door he noted the pictures, which he had caught a glimpse of once before, and the furniture. He observed now, with curious interest, that the red globular thing that he had taken for the bulb of a lamp, as he had seen it from the flagging outside, was really an odd vase.

He heard a faint sweep of skirts on the stair and everything else faded out.

Georgia stood in the doorway, a little paler and thinner. He saw, with an odd little touch of quite impersonal jealousy, that the simple ornament in her dark hair was strange to him.

She stopped abruptly, with a soft intaking of her breath like a sigh, a kind of eager wonder in her face. She saw her husband, poorly dressed, unshaven, defeated, appealing.

"Why, Jerry! Oh, Jerry!" she cried, in two short gasps, and ran towards him, her arms extended.

THE END

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